

VIRGIN ISLANDS PYS 2020-2023

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I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

This is a unified plan

B. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.

a. Plan Introduction or Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the US Virgin Islands prepare to evolve to the next stage of existence, the sobering reality that hovers amid all rooms of planning is a resounding - "It can all change again tomorrow." The fact is workforce development is a moving target. As a community and a workforce development board, we must rapidly fire at times without a direct aim taking on the adage: **ready, fire, aim**. With the rapid global evolution and the limited raw materials available in the workforce, if we aim first, by the time the target is in our sights, it has already shifted to a new direction. The objective is to create an agile pipeline of enhanced learning built for rapid evolution. Training and refinement will become the norm in our territory. Notice in this State Plan the Board has developed a lean approach with targeted tangible goals. The intention is to provide a plan that is accessible to all current and future partners in the workforce development effort. Current partners consisting of the VI Department of Labor, VI Department of Education, and VI Department of Human Services each play a vital role in the development and momentum of the workforce. The aggregation of these entities and Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) currently in place will pave the way to a talent pipeline with avenues for almost any situation. One department that also needs to be brought to the table to begin collaboration is the Bureau of Corrections.

While we focus heavily on Youth, Adult, and Dislocated workers, ex-offenders also play a part in our workforce development and community. If we can design a re-entry strategy to reduce recidivism by providing ex-offenders with a stake in society, we will be approaching workforce development now from all angles of the spectrum.

Tourism being the dominant industry, the prevailing notion often repeated is, "We need to diversify from tourism." While there is truth to that statement and strength in diversity, it should not be looked at as diversifying **from** Tourism... We should diversify **with** tourism. Data shows that occupations in the tourism industry before 2018 had little to no churn in employment. Any enterprise that is only disrupted by an act of God or pandemic can be considered an "all-weather" industry. Tourism is also an industry prime for reinvention and retraining of individuals to move into other occupation areas. These employees bring with them a high level of discipline and customer service from years in the tourism space. Sister industries such as healthcare/ homecare make for a smooth transition for these individuals. As the world's population ages, the destinations that seniors can travel to is limited. Not necessarily a limit on-desire or choice directly but a limit on the choice of where a senior tourist can receive assistance during their visit. Imagine a senior group being able to pre-arrange homecare and healthcare assistance in the Virgin Islands for their stay. From the time they arrive until the time they depart, professionals with years of experience in hospitality combined

with new training in healthcare/ homecare can be available to provide a safe and monitored experience.

During the drafting of this state plan, the territory and the world at large were hit with the rapidly spreading COVID-19 also known as, the Coronavirus global pandemic that shifted our way of life now and moving forward. The Virgin Islands saw schools and government agencies closed, and public gatherings limited to just ten people. While the work from home is the option echoed, not all workers have jobs that can be done remotely. Only knowledge-based workers have this luxury. Many blue-collar workers will go without work until the lockdowns are lifted, and things return to normal. Despite knowing as a world community that - we will get past this; it is also known that things will never be the same again. This event shakes the foundation of an entire class of workers and rapidly introduces thoughts of robotics and automation into the workplace at all levels. While a whole population of workers waits to go back to work, the question is – will they, and if they do for how long?

The Workforce Development Board will serve as the change agent, sounding the alarm with our partners and community, alerting on the urgency of our situation and limited time pivot. While targeting growth sectors, our workforce requires quick learning and agility. Our current pipeline is clogged by individuals in the government, and the private sector is stagnated in entry-level positions. This stagnation leads to frustrated employees who vent that frustration on the very public they serve.

This is often identified as “poor customer service” while that is the simple answer, the deeper reality is the attitude being demonstrated is a symptom of lack of fulfillment and the burden of weight. A weight not from the difficulty of the job but the weight time. Time reflecting the number of years being in the same position with no elevation and realization that there are even more years to go before retirement from that job. Due to a lack of skills and exposure to learning and personal development, these individuals feel lucky to just have a job even at the basic level as if they “snuck” into the workforce system by chance or prayed their way there. They remain quiet and under the radar as if not to be detected. They are living their employed life as if it were stolen and not earned. The thought is of promotion or advancement nonexistent. With every administration change or economic correction that fear continues to compound.

The VI Workforce Development Board will ensure these individuals understand their right to work and their right to have a secure stake in society. The Board will promote self-improvement and development by offering diversified training options by the Board-approved service providers and partners. With a strong partnership with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education, the Board can develop an aggregation of resources into one assembly line of talent for all Virgin Islanders, youth, Adult, Dislocated Workers, and ex-offenders.

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

(2) **Workforce Development, Education, and Training Activities Analysis**

(A) The State’s Workforce Development Activities

The Virgin Islands Workforce System is comprised of workforce and related programs from both WIOA core program partners and required one-stop delivery system partners. The agencies that make up the core program partners include: the **VI Department of Labor**, which administers the Youth, Adult, Dislocated Worker and Wagner-Peyser programs, the **VI**

Department of Education, which administers Adult Education and Family Literacy programs and the **VI Department of Human Services** which administers the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

The Virgin Islands Workforce Board serves as the link between all interagency and partner organizations as well as employer-generated activities and programs. The Board is charged with system coordination, integrity and compliance, and continuous improvement. Each of the four core agencies is represented on, and is a voting member of, the Virgin Islands Workforce Board.

One-Stop Job Centers (American Job Centers)

The Virgin Islands One-Stop American Job Centers housed in each island district at the VI Department of Labor's offices serves as the hub of all employment and training activity. It is a job-driven system designed to simplify access to education, training and support services needed to attain employment. It is specifically designed to assist those with multiple barriers to attaining and maintaining employment by streamlining administrative functions and focusing on individual goal attainment. An expansive offering of career readiness and training services are available and may be accessed either virtually through the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (Views) at www.vidolviews.org or in person at one of the two Job Center branches. Services are available to both job seeker customers and employer customers.

The Virgin Islands Workforce System operates on the premise that everyone who accesses the system is seeking employment – either a first-time job or an advanced work opportunity. To achieve these goals individuals must be equipped with knowledge of their career interest area, the skill levels to perform at their desired point of entry, an understanding of the local work environment and the discipline to be effective and productive on the job. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides the framework through which these services are delivered. Job seekers have access to career services that prepares them for the workforce and training services that help them attain credentials in varying skill areas and follow up services to ensure career goals are met.

The Virgin Islands American Job Centers also serve as a portal to the business community. The Employer Engagement Team assists businesses, small to large, with solutions to their workforce needs.

Employers can schedule access to the Job Centers' facilities for screening, interviewing or providing workshops for their current or potential employees, they may request assistance with the administration of testing or career assessments, work with business service representatives to develop job fairs or information dissemination, post their job vacancies; or schedule hiring events. Employers can also take advantage of a range of business training solutions that help their employees ascend the career ladder within their organization. Those solutions include incumbent worker training that allows current employees to upgrade their skills or customized training for new and current employees who need to master a specific skill set.

The Virgin Islands Workforce System is made up of multiple programs offered by WIOA core and non-core partners who coordinate services to reduce duplication and ensure that all potential barriers are addressed. The core partners include Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth programs); Title II (Adult Education programs); Title III (Wagner-Peyser programs) and Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation programs).

Title I

Job seeker customers have access to services to include job readiness workshops and seminars, individualized career counseling, and job search, matching and referrals. Those customers requiring additional assistance in securing employment work with case managers to develop an individual service strategy (ISS) which identifies their employment goals and sets a path through educational services, work experiences, occupational skills training and support

services to help each individual achieve that goal. Job seekers who are new to the world of work can test their newly developed skills through short term work experience or on-the-job training. Current labor market information can be accessed through the virtual system www.vidolviews.org and is used to ensure that training is aligned with locally in-demand occupations.

Additionally, job seekers who have been, or are about to be, laid off from their current employment have access to all workforce preparedness and training services. Through the reemployment program they can rework their resume, hone their interviewing techniques and job search skills. If retraining is necessary, they are referred for occupational skills training in local demand occupation areas.

Youth customers have access to fourteen (14) program elements designed to develop the whole person with wrap around services that are connected to career development goals.

Title II

Customers who seek to obtain their high school diploma or equivalent are referred to Adult Education services offered by the VI Department of Education. Students can achieve their secondary level credentials through the traditional route – attending subject specific classes to earn credits (20 required); or by taking preparatory courses for the General Educational Development (GED) diploma which consists of a set of five tests: Math, Reading, Writing, Social Studies and Science.

All Adult Education students are assessed with the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Students who score 6.9 or below on the TABE are enrolled in skills classes. Basic Skills Enhancement courses are available for students who need goal-specific elementary or secondary level basic skills such as work-related math, functional literacy and reading or writing assistance. For English language learners, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes from the pre-literacy to the advanced level are available to help the adult learner develop speaking, listening, reading writing and grammar skills to communicate effectively and function successfully with their workplaces and community.

Title III

Wagner-Peyser programs are also administered by the VI Department of Labor. The primary customers are job seekers who are skilled and ready for work or who have been in the workforce and are seeking employment change or advancement. These customers can either virtually or in person use the resources of the Job Centers to prepare/update their resumes; attend virtual or in- house workshops and seminars designed to enhance workplace etiquette; or attend short-term pre- vocational activities to enhance specific skill sets such as computer literacy, communication skills and interviewing techniques. Job search activities are generated through live labor market data and demand sector information.

Labor market information to include an analysis of workforce trends, economic indicators, labor market supply, income and wage data and occupation and industry profiles are a few of services available to employers using the Workforce System. Information is available either virtually through the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System www.vidolviews.org or through the American Job Center.

Title IV

Job seeker customers, who because of a disability may need additional assistance attaining employment, may be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services administered by the VI Department of Human Services. Once eligibility is determined through a comprehensive assessment, customers work with a VR counselor to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The services available include: vocational counseling, guidance and referral;

vocational training; transition services from school to work; rehabilitation technology services; supported employment; and job search and placement.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program serves persons with various types of disabilities. Financial eligibility may be required to receive some purchased services.

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Required Partners

Programs offered by the required partners of the One-Stop delivery system include: the *VI Department of Labor* – Unemployment Insurance program; the *VI Department of Education* – Career and Technical Education programs; the *VI Department of Human Services* – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Senior Community Service Employment program; and the *VI Housing Authority* – Youthbuild, and Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) programs.

An expansive offering of career readiness and training services are available and may be accessed either virtually through the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) at www.vidolviews.org or in person at one of the two Job Center branches. Services are available to both job seeker customers and employer customers.

The Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) also helps increase reach for customers who prefer a self-directed system navigation style. Besides job search, customers can also post their resume, take advantage of numerous online work readiness courses, and access local research trends with real-time labor market information.

As with the job-seeking workforce, current agency workforce staff in each core, as well as non-core partner programs, have seen staff aging and retiring from employment. While new staff is being recruited, the ability to address both job seeker and employer customer needs remains challenging. The Workforce System seeks to address this by using customer service and employer engagement joint agency teams. To address customer training needs, local service providers offer a variety of approved training programs. Each program provides a nationally recognized certificate upon successful completion.

With a new One-Stop operator set to take place this year in 2020, the Workforce Development Board and our program partners anticipate enhanced service to the clients. This is well timed since in response to Covid-19, outreach to clients, will need to have an exponential increase. Much of the current approved training providers are also being encouraged to develop digital content so that training can still be provided in the event of a future pandemic/ lockdown situation. Online training will also provide a method for 24X7 learning offered by the traditional brick and mortar training partners.

(B) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

Strengths

Single point of Operations – The base of operations for the Virgin Islands Workforce System has always been managed by a single entity – The Virgin Islands Department of Labor. It houses the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser and Unemployment Insurance programs. Program and fiscal staff interact consistently to align activities and services for both job seeker and employer customers. The LMI (Labor Market Information) unit is also in-house which facilitates access to real time data and analyses that drive decision making by the Board as well as Workforce Staff. The Department of Labor serves as the clearinghouse for all employment activities. By VI law (*Act 5174*) all employers must register their job vacancies with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor.

Small Community – The Virgin Islands is a small community; therefore workforce agencies and programs share the same customer base thus providing additional opportunities for alignment of activities and services. Partnerships and interagency activities are more fluid and translated through living Memoranda of Understanding – ensuring that the customer receives holistic support services while they progress along their chosen career paths.

Shared Common Goal – The main strength of the current workforce board and system as a whole is a greater sense of understanding the common goal as it relates to workforce development. No one saves the world alone and, in the past, it seems that though all program partners were well-skilled there was not an orchestrated effort moving in the same direction – no aggregation of resources. With the new team and momentum our greatest strength is in real collaboration. Also, the board is comprised of individuals that understand the nature of the situation from both sides. Having come from the same environments of the most at-risk individuals that the board and the program partners are charged with serving, actual impact areas and strategies can be targeted.

Weaknesses

Lack of Clear Measures—The biggest weakness has been not having a real-time measure on the effectiveness of workforce development activities. There is no single dashboard that exists detailing the measure of all program partners' progress and how many individuals are in the virtual workforce pipeline. To date, as a new Board there is a lack of understanding on the number of individuals with skills or strengths that are available to work, but just have not found a job. There is no way to know the best direction without knowing this data. As a traditional workforce development system, we are charged with developing new talents and strengthening the weaknesses of candidates. However, what if we have been doing this the wrong way? What if we need to somehow identify the individual strengths of each individual and steer them to the training and paths that align with those strengths? It costs more to eliminate a weakness than it does to enhance a strength.

Limited Data Sharing – The partnerships formed with both internal and external partners of the Workforce System have not yet reached the point where technology bridges the gap.

Program Silos – The Workforce System has made great strides in collaborating with programs and partners to streamline access to services; however, many programs still operate in a vacuum once the common intake process is completed.

Better Utilization of Consulting Resources—Another weakness that has been observed as a new Board is lack of full accountability as it relates to workforce contractors/ consultants. From initial observation “Workforce Development” as we know it is big business. There are droves of individuals who claim to be experts, but in fact amount to merely marketing and well wishes. Similar to the analog marketing days, it's hard to measure the effectiveness. These individuals know the lingo, programs, and processes of workforce development, but at times have no clue in placing someone in the right job, at the right time, with the right strengths. They themselves have probably never been unemployed (unless by choice). Most of the excuses these professionals provide in response to low results or not moving the needle, is that “the workforce is just not trained”, “we’re trying our best to reach them”, “They just aren’t responding”. Said and listened to long enough and you begin to realize there really is no expectation of change, just continuing the illusion of activity. But they get paid. Their employment is administering for the unemployed.

This year and in the coming years the USVI Workforce Development system will be reshaped to align and target where the need exists and focus on identifying and building strengths, rather than counting never ending weaknesses.

Island economy – The Virgin Islands is a single local delivery area; however, there are two districts in the Virgin Islands which are separated by forty miles of ocean. All services must be

made available in each district in order for customers to have access to the full range of workforce services. This is true for the partner agencies and community organizations as well. This separation creates an inherent duplication in all services and activities proffered.

Employment base is limited – While job seeker customers may have career goals that are in keeping with the fast-moving global economy, those occupations are not often present or practical within an island economy where demand occupations are relatively static.

Inconsistency of service delivery between island districts – The flow of services and products offered between island districts, although expected to have some unique distinctions, are not consistent enough to create the image of a unified system. Customers are challenged to see the Workforce System as a single unit of operation.

Undue demand on Employers – The employer base in the Territory is comprised largely of small to medium sized business. Businesses in the VI have traditionally been good corporate partners, however, with multiple demands by multiple agencies and organizations on the same entities the element of fatigue takes its toll on even the most willing employer.

(C) State Workforce Development Capacity

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act continues to present a new vantage point for serving all customers of the workforce system. Previously focused on talent development, the WIOA system is job driven and focuses on developing talent with specific employment outcomes in local demand sectors as the goal.

The process of creating a Unified State Plan demonstrates the capacity of the US Virgin Islands program partners to effectively collaborate toward the common goal of workforce development. With this collaboration we understand that with the limited resources each partner has at their disposal an aggregation of resources and sharing of data is the only path forward. No one saves the world alone and with the critical nature of the Virgin Islands workforce responding to cultural setbacks, natural disasters, and now a global pandemic, there is no choice but to work together.

The Virgin Islands has limited workforce capacity on these three main fronts:

1. There continues to be a crisis of skilled youth migrating from the territory either right after graduation or right after they have gained a marketable skill or trade.
2. With an aging population it can be difficult to retrain or re-energize someone to elevate in the workforce or enter the workforce.
3. There are not enough workforce development funds allocated to the territory, even with the aggregation of resources, commensurate with the level of impact that is needed to make actual change.

With these limiting factors, the Virgin Islands has a long road ahead. Unless more resources can be allocated to apply the proper pressure on our workforce pipeline, we will continue to move at a slow trickle – no matter how thirsty we are for change.

Many actions are ongoing, and the raw materials (potential workers) exist to develop a strong diverse workforce. However more needs to be done and those actions are driven by numbers, both financial and statistical. One of the features the workforce board hopes to develop with realization of the goals set forth in this plan, is the ability to state how many individuals are in our workforce development pipeline and at what stage they are. This will define what our capacity is at one level of the pipeline and provide tangible data to identify what is needed to move them through.

These critical issues must be addressed through the current system. At this time, the US Virgin Islands has two main One-Stop or American Job Centers (AJCs) located in each of the island

districts. The AJCs are housed within the Virgin Islands Department of Labor offices with the core partner Vocational Rehabilitation and non-core partners SNAP and TANF maintaining a physical presence on a scheduled basis. Adult Education does not have a presence in the Job Center; coordinated referrals are done for literacy and GED training and testing. There are two Access Points, one in each island district, housed by the University of the Virgin Islands Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning S (UVI CELL) which are in close proximity to public housing communities. The Access Points serve as a point of registration into the Workforce System, point of access to information on career readiness, job opportunities and available training and a learning site for selected training.

The VI can address these issues by forging stronger partnerships with both core and non-core partners; the Workforce System has increased its capacity to reach more customers and provide them access to universal career readiness services at any location they first enter. System partners have created an orientation presentation that provides information on workforce preparedness in general and further broken down into each partner's role in the process. An accompanying handout with location and contact information for specific services will be available.

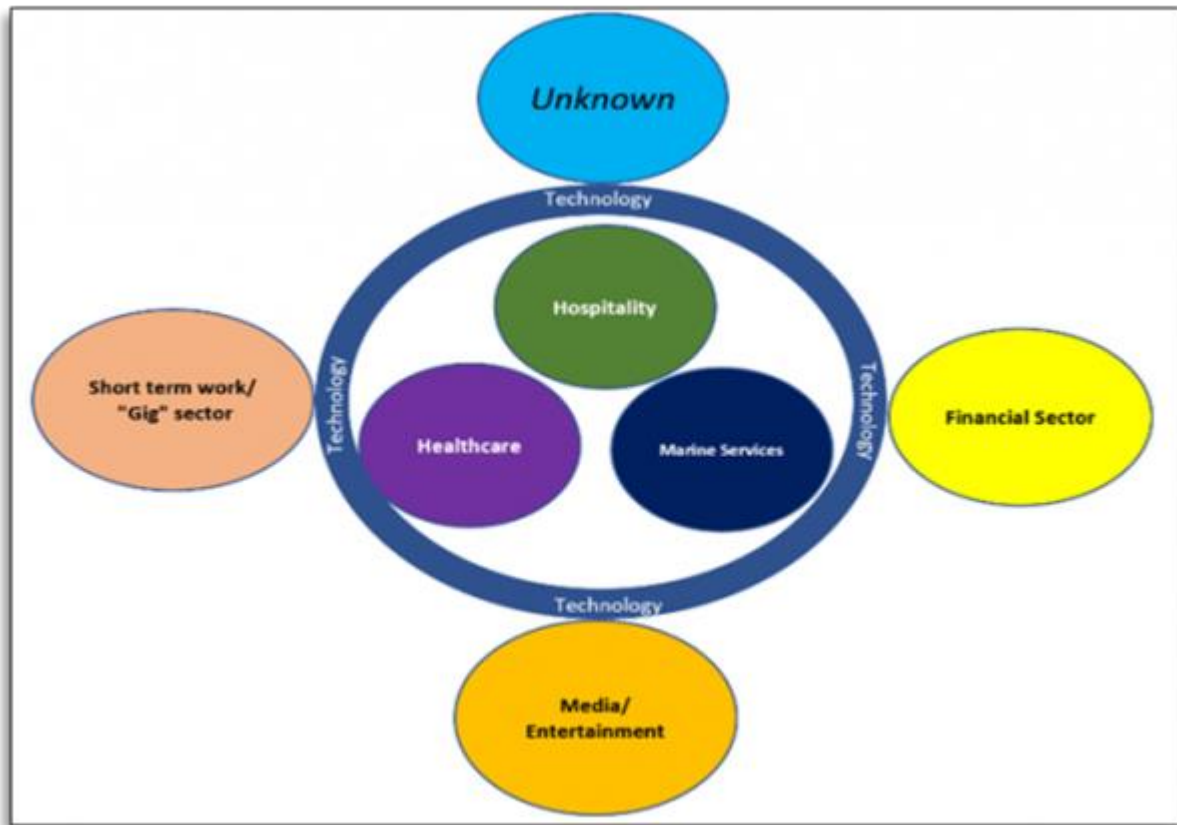
(b) State Strategic Vision and goals

The U.S. Virgin Islands' recovery is tied to a strong economy and a flexible workforce that supports its continued growth. Employment opportunities must be accessible for all job seekers, and available in industry sectors that promise a rewarding return for both the job seeker and the employer.

(1) Vision

The VI Workforce Development Board vision for the next four years is to create an unshakeable pipeline of talent and employment built to evolve with change and demand.

The vision seeks to create a Workforce Delivery System that promotes a dynamic collaborative between workforce agencies and business that is responsive to the growth and stability of the local economy. The System will connect to businesses by providing a full range of career development services that begins with building foundational and personal development goals, enhancing basic academic skills, and occupational skill proficiency that leads to the attainment of a post-secondary certificate or degree in order to find meaningful and progressive employment.



CORE INDUSTRIES

- a. Hospitality
- b. Healthcare
- c. Maritime
- d. Technology

SUPPORT INDUSTRIES

- e. Media/ Entertainment
- f. Short term/ Gig economy
- g. Financial Services
- h. Unknown

*Possible Unknown/ undefined occupation in response COVID-19 **Contact Tracer**. This occupation would be a cross between data analyst, customer service, and health care. *

Economic Analysis

II. Strategic Elements

(a) Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis.

(1) Economic and Workforce Analysis

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, designed in 2014, acts as a catalyst for providing the basis for the development of a dynamic and competent system that builds and maintains a career-driven, adaptable, and technologically literate workforce. As government leaders, our primary goal is to ensure that USVI transitions from a reactionary territory to one that is proactive and calculated in the promotion of financial stability, economic growth, job opportunities, and a higher standard of living for all Virgin Islanders.

After review of Economic and Workforce data, the following key challenges were identified:

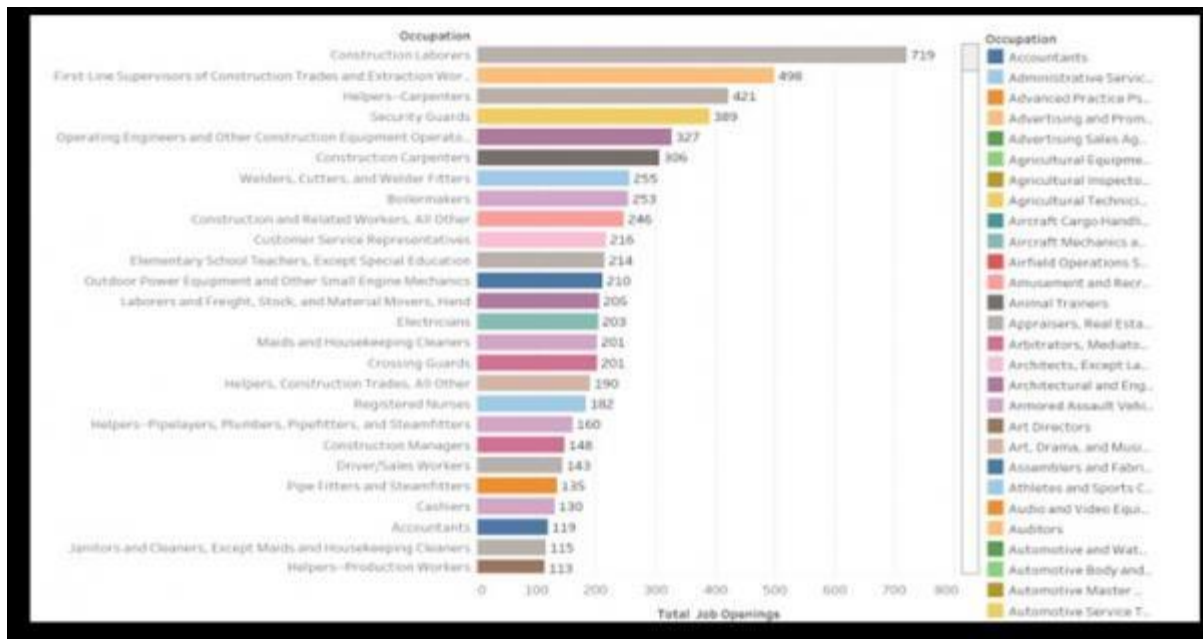
1. Contracting output for close to a decade that is expected to rise
2. Growth volatility
3. Declining population and high median age
4. Undiversified economy: extreme tourism dependence
5. Most jobs are low paying
6. We are amid economic recovery fueled by Federal assistance

(A) Economic Analysis

The U.S. Virgin Islands continues to recover from the widespread devastation brought about by two back to back category 5 hurricanes that severely impacted the Territory in September 2017 and as recovery was progressing impacted by the recessionary pressures caused by the Covid-19 Coronavirus. Prior to the storms, the local economy was making gradual strides towards stability, with small businesses beginning to expand their product and workforce, with infrastructure projects on roadways and harbors projected to start within a few months, and with the anticipation of the oil refinery, once the top private employer in the Virgin Islands announcing its reopening.

(i) Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

The industry demand demonstrates the increase in construction trades as the VI continues to rebuild from the 2017 Category 5 hurricanes. As noted, all the high demand positions are blue collar labor intensives positions. These short-term demand positions and jobs will provide the opportunity for the US Virgin Islands to build the balance of the infrastructure and emphasize longer term positions in health care, information technology, and marine industries while also maintaining the career path and occupational cluster/sector efforts in construction. Also, a large employer will continue to be government and government-related institutions. In addition to government employment, serving as the foundation of this growing economy will be the tourism and hospitality industry. While impacted by Coronavirus, the VI expects this to rebound during 2021 and onward providing for a diverse economy of quality occupations.



The data above as of 2019 shows that the existing job market demand occupation centers around construction. The top 3 demand occupations are all within the construction sector:

1. **Construction Laborers** – Total of 719 Job Openings
2. **First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades** - Total of 498 Job Openings
3. **Helpers—Carpenter** - Total of 421 Job Openings

The fourth highest demand occupation is Security Guards. The top ten demand occupations all center around physical, blue-collar work supported by recovery reconstruction supported by Federal funds. It is expected that these industries will be in demand from 2020 to 2026. While these occupations have a low barrier to entry and are employing many individuals, they only temporarily fill the employment gap. Once the Federal funds allocated to reconstruction are exhausted, the demand for these occupations will decline. At the same time, with these workers currently employed, limited time exists for training or preparation to pivot into another occupation.

The next demand occupation right after the top ten construction-related occupations is customer service. Supported primarily by the tourism industry, the Tourism/ Hospitality industry is an anchor sector for the US Virgin Islands. It is the goal of the territory to diversify the economy to be less reliant on tourism; however, to do so, all individuals across the hospitality industry and other entry-level carriers will need to be retrained and placed on a path to continuous training. Once aligned with emerging demand sectors, workers can gradually migrate to jobs in the knowledge-based demand sectors.

A detailed review of the USVI's economic challenge identifies the need for a coherent policy structure that incorporates the USVI's strategic assets to encourage business and innovation through technology, which will lead us towards sustainable growth and new economic prosperity.

These priorities are to address the lack of economic diversity, low educational performance and workforce skills, in addition to inadequate public infrastructure investment. We are aligned to inclusion and economic growth to garner quality work opportunities, cultivate human capital, invest in infrastructure, and enhance natural resource management and conservation. Therefore, we must develop quality structures and improve entrepreneurship support systems.

(ii) Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

Industry employment aligns with the employment situation and reflects increases in the construction sector. This sector is expected to be sustained at this level throughout the year as well as calendar year 2021 and into the 1st quarter of 2022. The continued recovery from the hurricanes, ongoing infrastructure enhancement and the reestablishment of refining petroleum products are the main drivers in this sector.

The weak sectors continue to be leisure and hospitality, and retail which have been down from the 4th quarter of 2017 into 3rd quarter of 2018 as a direct result of tourism related establishments offline due to the impact of the storms. While this sector was expected to remain weak, straight through 2018 – 2019, it had shown signs of significant rebound with the reopening of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in September 2019 and the activity at the Frenchmen's Reef and others. However, the Covid-19 impact caused an immediate shutdown of the Ritz-Carlton and other facilities. As the Covid-19 impact is addressed the leisure and hospitality and related restaurant and retail markets will grow in the upcoming year.

Occupation	Location Quotient /a	Hourly Wage (USD)	Mean Annual Salary (USD)
Computer User Support Specialists	0.49	22.34	46,470
Postal Service Mail Carriers	0.48	27.56	57,330
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	0.48	13.94	28,990
Management Analysts	0.46	34.45	71,660
Medical Assistants	0.43	15.25	31,730
Healthcare Support Occupations	0.42	15.06	31,330
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	0.42	23.85	49,610
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	0.41	20.26	42,130
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	0.36	29.02	60,360
Production Occupations	0.36	21.05	43,790
Human Resources Specialists	0.35	28.88	60,070
Computer Systems Analysts	0.34	25.74	53,550
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	0.33	16.01	33,310
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	0.32	28.30	58,860
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing,	0.21	20.71	43,080
Average		22.83	47484.67

The most underrepresented occupations in the territory, however, are the highest paying as these jobs are knowledge-intensive, as detailed above.

The above chart identifies the Emerging Demand Sectors. At the top of the list is Computer User Support Specialists, with an annual mean salary of \$46,470. This career is the highest paid on the chart and the least represented as of 2020. The second demand occupation on the list is Postal Service Mail Carriers, with a mean annual salary of \$57,330. Of the emerging demand occupations, 80% of them are geared towards knowledge-based workers. Other emerging industries and their mean salaries consist of:

Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators - \$28,990

Management Analysts - \$71,660

Medical Assistants - \$31,730

Healthcare Support Occupations - \$31,330

Welders, Cutters, and Brazers - \$49,610

Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations - \$42,130

Architecture and Engineering - \$60,360

Production Occupations - \$43,790

Human Resources Specialists - \$60,070

Computer Systems Analysts - \$53,550

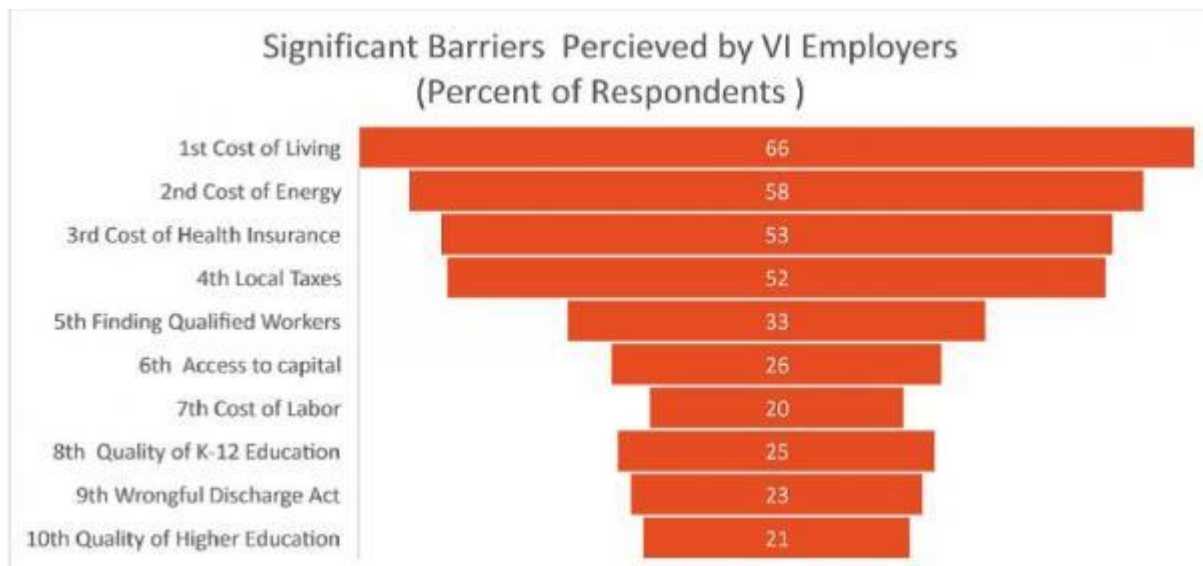
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists - \$33,310

Computer and Mathematical Occupations - \$58,860

Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing - \$43,080

(ii) Employers - Employment needs

With the demand for employees strong in the construction industry in the short-term and the additional sectors of health care, information technology, and marine industries, the employers face barriers in doing business in the Virgin Islands. Some of the barriers are listed and enumerated below.



BARRIERS EMPLOYERS FACE DOING BUSINESS IN THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Despite a large skills gap between what employers need and what job seekers can do, the number one challenge reported by businesses in the Virgin Islands is the overall cost of living. A total of 66% of respondents indicated that the cost of living in the Virgin Islands was the top challenge in doing business which also translates over to a barrier to hiring. The next major barrier to employers, which would also be included in the high cost of living, is the cost of energy. A total of 58% of respondents indicate the high cost of energy is a major barrier to doing business. At 33%, employers indicated that finding qualified workers is their 5th major barrier. The data indicates that right after the major overhead comes along with doing business in the Virgin Islands, finding quality workers is a top barrier. A more in-depth study was done by the VI Bureau of Economic Research in 2015, indicating the following:

“...Essential hard skills deficits in reading, writing and verbal skills (40%); computer technical skills (27%) and math logical reasoning (22%) are most cited as lacking in candidates”. The often-stated lack of soft skills is primarily related to customer service (59%), punctuality and reliability (52%), and time management (42%).

Half of the businesses (53%) expressed that the main cause for hiring difficulties is lack of relevant work experience, or lack of technical or occupational skills (49%). Forty percent (40%) cited that there were not enough qualified applicants to choose from.

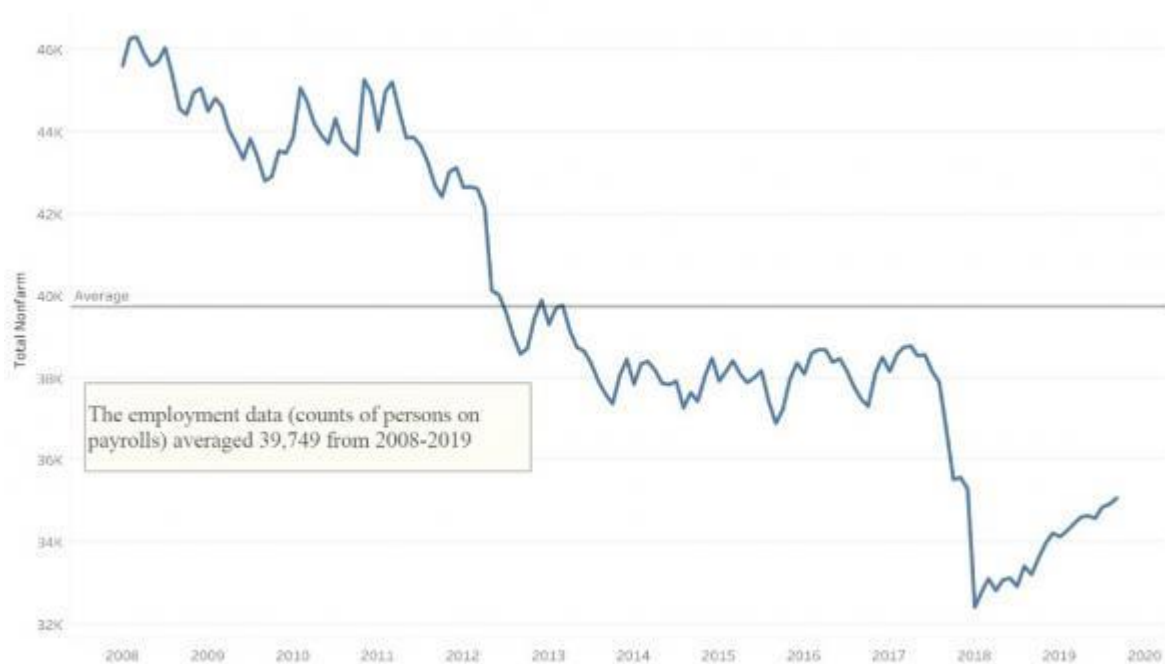
Based on this analysis, the workforce possesses a lack of general education skills to meet the needs of the employers, both current and long-term. Additionally, essential soft skills are also lacking. These will be priorities for the Workforce Development Board to address.

(A) Workforce Analysis

An ongoing impact of the two category 5 hurricanes is the loss of private sector employment. This has been across the key high employment industries of hospitality and tourism and related retail and small business.

(i) Employment and Unemployment

PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYMENT 2008-2019



Signs of recovery – declining unemployment

Total Virgin Islands unemployed average for 2019: 2,701

St Croix average is 1,079

St Thomas average is 1,647

The data above details that between 2008 and 2019 that the Virgin Islands have never rebounded to 2008 levels of employment of 46,000 persons on payrolls. There was a gradual decline every year between 2008 and 2011 with some volatility in between, but the average remained above 43,000 employed individuals on payrolls. The sharpest drop occurs between 2012 and 2013, with a massive decline to 39,000 employed and has never returned to the early 2012 levels. However, in 2018 another sharp decline drops to a little over 32,000 people employed. The pattern mirrors the 2008 to 2013 pattern in decline and time. The alarming fact is that if this pattern remains, it suggests that the jobs lost will not return to prior levels.

Now in 2020, with the emergence of the COVID-19 Coronavirus, a forced recession across the globe brought on by quarantine and shelter in place mandates will cause another sharp decline in employment. Will businesses that are affected by this virus return to previous employment levels, or will they learn to get by with fewer employees?

Direct Tourism Related Employment



But not surprising is the fact that data shows the direct Tourism-related employment being steady with little to no loss from 2008 up until 2018.

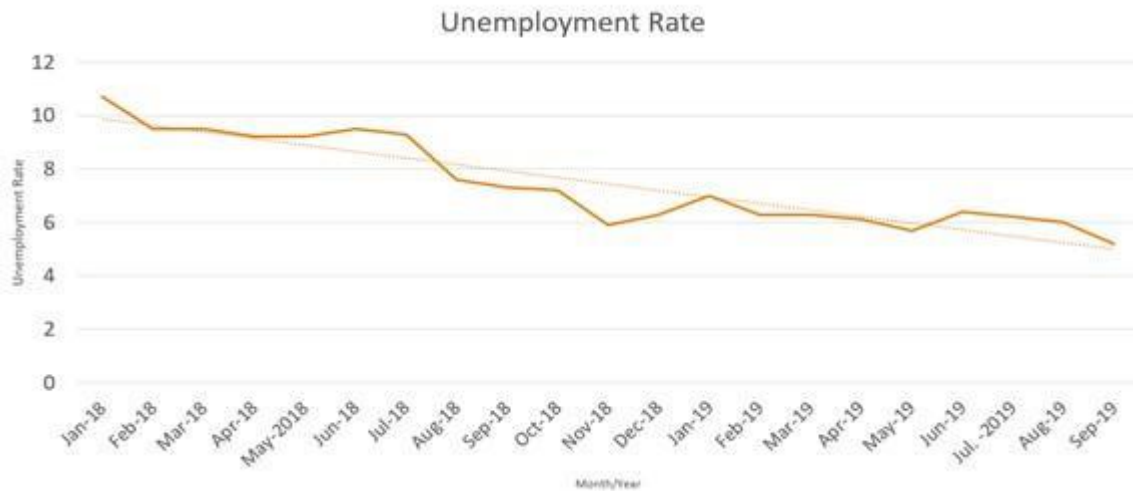
Leisure and Hospitality – a median of 8,000 employed dips to 4,000 in 2018

Real Estate and Rental – a median of 1,100 employed dips to 850 in 2018

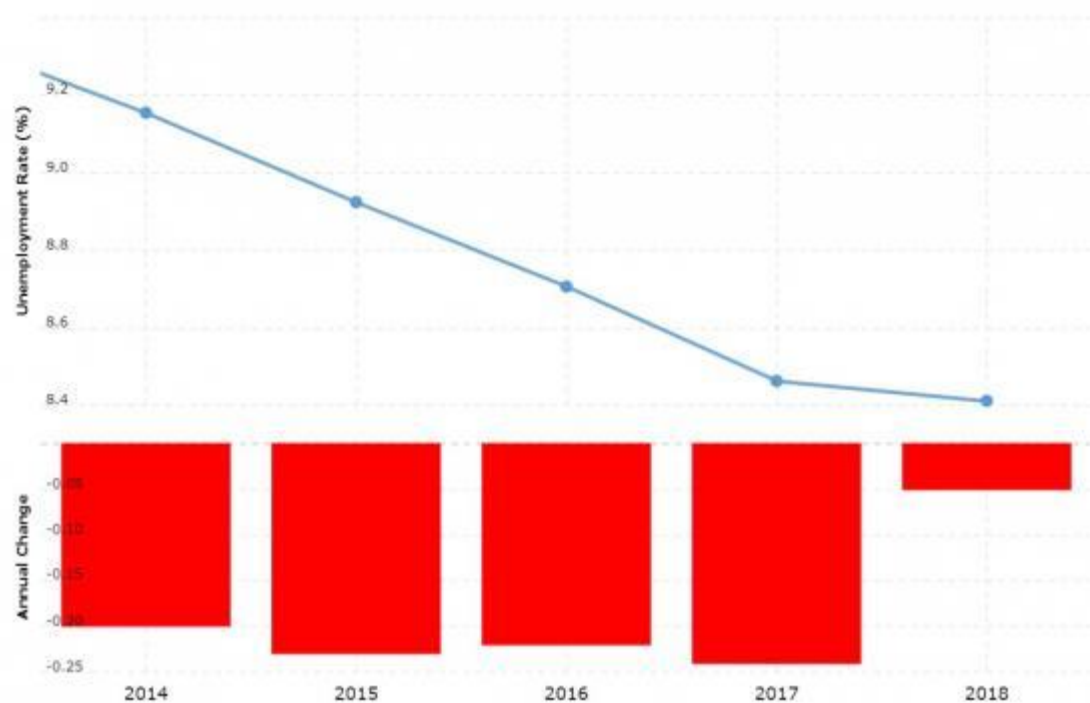
Trade/ Transportation – median of 8,000 employed dip 6,500 in 2018

Retail Trade – a median of 6,000 employed dips to 5,500 in 2018

While it is the common notion that we need to diversify from a tourism-based economy, the reality is we should diversify *from* tourism, and we should diversify *with* tourism. The biggest threats to tourism are natural disasters and/ or pandemics like we are experiencing in 2020. This suggests a steady demand in our tourism market, which has a seasoned workforce prime for retraining and refinement to springboard into other occupations like healthcare/ homecare for an aging population. The transition of a seasoned employee in the tourism/ hospitality occupation then creates space for a new entrant to the workforce. This is truly an example of a pipeline of talent which places seasoned workers in one industry with all the skills and discipline gained into a higher paying occupation. The only other occupation prime for the same transition strategy is government.



Signs of the labor market recovering from the sharp 2018 dip are apparent with the declining unemployment rate. This is fueled by federal funds and not overall sustained improvement but improvement, nonetheless. This period allows for preparation for the possible dip in the next five years.



The unemployment rate for 2018 was 8.41%, a 0.05% decline from 2017;
 unemployment rate for 2017 was 8.46%, a 0.24% decline from 2016;
 unemployment rate for 2016 was 8.71%, a 0.22% decline from 2015;
 unemployment rate for 2015 was 8.92%, a 0.23% decline from 2014.

1. Labor Market Trends
 - (i) Labor Market Trends

The most evident labor market trend in the Virgin Islands is that the most common jobs are low paying. The educational criteria for many of the openings are at the high school diploma or equivalent level and are occupations within the service industry such as cashiers, office clerks, and customer service representatives. Advanced degree occupations with the highest demand are operations managers, accountants, registered nurses, and financial occupations. Initial current demand positions such as the construction industry require a high school diploma and some basic educational reading and mathematics skills.

To measure the labor market trend occupations as compared to other states and territories, a location quotient was calculated. A location quotient is a way to calculate how saturated an occupation or group is compared to national numbers. It can reveal a unique strength or invisible weakness.

What our data shows is that the most common jobs are low, paying entry-level occupations. This is an invisible weakness of the territory as these low paying wages can easily create a churn in employees and make a wide range of occupations more

LQ Ranking	Occupation	Location Quotient/a	Hourly Wage (USD)	Mean Annual Salary (USD)
1	Captains, Mates Water Vessels	19.63	22.62	47,060
2	Ground Maintenance Workers	11.47	14.58	30,340
3	Transportation Security Screeners	10.60	18.71	38,910
4	Agricultural and Food Science Technicians	6.82	17.48	36,350
5	Couriers and Messengers	4.84	14.13	29,390
6	Reservation, Transportation Ticket Agents and Travel Clerks	4.77	12.79	26,590
7	Security Guards	4.54	12.56	26,120
8	Postal Service Clerks	4.49	26.20	54,500
9	Tour and Travel Guides	4.42	15.63	32,510
10	Switchboard Operators, Including Answering Service	4.06	14.10	29,330
11	Childcare Workers	3.91	11.50	23,920
12	Chief Executives	3.77	66.93	139,210
13	Cargo and Freight Agents	3.39	14.33	29,810
14	Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other	3.36	23.63	49,140
15	Brickmasons and Blockmasons	3.30	23.27	48,410
	Average Salary		20.56	42,772.67
	Average Salary if Chief Executives Excluded/b			35,884.29

attractive. This is seen in the number of Virgin Islanders that hold these jobs relocating to the mainland, where in some cases for jobs paying only slightly more. This process repeated hundreds of times makes for a silent leak in the workforce pipeline. The employees are transitioning to the same level of a job for slightly more money but giving the impression that they are better off due to a lower cost of living on the mainland.

If this process/ leak spreads to more knowledge-based workers, we will continue to erode the raw material in human capital available to “level-up” in the workforce. In addition, when an organization loses a knowledge-based worker in an entry-level position, that job may not return, or may be replaced by automation. Urgency and awareness need to be placed on creating avenues for the professional development of current workers drifting in low paying jobs.

The location quotient data shows the overrepresentation by occupation:

1. Captains, Mates Water Vessels: **20X the national average**
2. Ground Maintenance Workers: **11X the national average**
3. Transportation Security Screeners: **10X the national average**
4. Agricultural and Food Science Technicians: **7X the national average**
5. Couriers and Messengers: **5X the national average**
6. Reservation, Transportation Ticket Agents and Travel Clerks: **5X the national average**
7. Security Guards: **5X the national average**
8. Postal Service Clerks: **5X the national average**
9. Tour and Travel Guides: **4X the national average**
10. Switchboard Operators, Including Answering Service: **4X the national average**
11. Childcare Workers: **4X the national average**
12. Chief Executives: **4X the national average**
13. Cargo and Freight Agents: **3X the national average**
14. Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other: **3X the national average**
15. Brickmasons and Blockmasons: **3X the national average**

In Contrast the Occupations in demand and with the lowest representation

1. Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators: **0.5X the national average**
2. Management Analysts - \$71,660: **0.5X the national average**
3. Medical Assistants - \$31,730: **0.4X the national average**
4. Healthcare Support Occupations - \$31,330: **0.4X the national average**
5. Welders, Cutters, and Brazers - \$49,610: **0.4X the national average**
6. Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations - \$42,130: **0.4X the national average**
7. Architecture and Engineering - \$60,360: **0.4X the national average**
8. Production Occupations - \$43,790: **0.4X the national average**
9. Human Resources Specialists - \$60,070: **0.4X the national average**
10. Computer Systems Analysts - \$53,550: **0.3X the national average**
11. Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists - \$33,310: **0.3X the national average**
12. Computer and Mathematical Occupations - \$58,860: **0.3X the national average**
13. Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing - \$43,080: **0.2X the national average**

These underrepresented occupations are the highest paying but knowledge intensive. More representation in these areas either through migration of existing workers into these areas

through training or guiding new entrants in towards these areas – High School graduates, College graduates, GED recipients, etc.

(i) Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

Education and skills levels are critical factors in workforce development continuity and expansion. The Virgin Islands workforce education levels reflect that the majority of the territory's educational skill level is at the high school diploma level. The educational attainment level of employees can be seen in the table below.

Persons 25 and over	Number	Percent Share
Less the HS Diploma	2,2381	29.8
HS Diploma or GED	29,022	38.7
Some college no degree	8,656	11.5
Associate Degree	3,890	5.2
Bachelor's degree	8,515	11.3
Post bachelor's degree	2,572	3.4
Total	75,036	100

Data from a Virgin Islands Community survey in 2015 identified that the Virgin Islands has a low educational attainment level compared to high labor productivity countries including other areas in the United States mainland.

Persons 25 and over:

High School Diploma or GED: **29,022**

Some College no degree: **8,656**

Associate Degree: **3,890**

Bachelor's Degree: **8,515**

Post bachelor's degree: **2,572**

This low credential attainment also reflects in the low credential attainment in the workforce development boards WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) funded training programs. The focus needs to be placed on where these candidates are deficient. Lack of credential attainment leads creates a barrier for these individuals transitioning into higher-paying knowledge-based occupations.

(i) Skill Gaps

The 2015 US Virgin Islands Business and Employer Survey conducted by the VI Bureau of

Economic Research states that "essential hard skills deficits in reading, writing and verbal skills (40%); computer technical skills (27%) and math logical reasoning (22%) are most cited as lacking in candidates". The often-stated lack of soft skills is primarily related to customer service (59%), punctuality and reliability (52%), and time management (42%). While this survey was conducted in 2015, given the impact of the two category five hurricanes and the Covid-19 impact on slowing the economy, the WDB believes this data is still relevant.

Half of businesses (53%) have expressed that the main cause contributing to hiring difficulties in jobseekers is lack of relevant work experience; or lack of technical or occupational skills (49%). Forty percent (40%) have cited that there are not enough qualified applicants to choose from.

In summary, employers in the Territory have identified skill gaps in the workforce in three specific categories:

- *Soft Skills* – to include customer service, punctuality and time management
- *Basic Academic Foundational Skills* – specifically math, writing and verbal language efficiency
- *Low Technological Skills* – limited basic fluidity, limited knowledge of applications and web-based navigation

Workforce Skills Assessment

As stated earlier and based on the shift in the economy, the Virgin Islands is at a crossroads with a misaligned workforce population. This asymmetry is not entirely based on educational deficiency, but partially endemic to island economy, and many years of declining output capacity (depletion of the goods producing sector, and moving toward a single source sector economy, tourism), which when present, spurs entry level employment and results in an areas' labor force gaining work experience and building upon skill sets necessary to meet employers' job demand.

An independent survey conducted by the Virgin Islands Bureau of Economic Research on employment skills gaps in 2015, supports the Board's analysis of the skewed infrastructure. Of the establishments that were respondents in the survey, 38% indicated having difficulties filling positions. Sectors that experienced difficulty were retail, scientific, professional, and accommodation services. Some of the difficulty is attributable to the seasonality component where the business cycles' window of ramping up personnel for quarterly employment, or short-term projects, places pressure on the labor supply pool

The survey revealed that technical management, sales, administrative, and skilled trades are most difficult to fill. Shortfalls in the number of candidates with relevant work experience was a primary reason reported by 53% of the respondents. Forty-nine percent (49%) stated candidates lacked technical or occupational skills. Sixteen percent (16%) cited candidate's unwillingness to accept offered wages. Other reasons were lack of soft skills, behavioral, and work ethics.

The survey demonstrated consensus on the impact of workforce skill gaps on the surveyed establishments. Overall, it touches each entities' bottom line, workload, and competitiveness abroad and in the local market. Some of the impact factors are ranked in the chart below including delay in product development, loss of revenue, market share and/or niche, operating cost, and loss of customers.

Area	Rank
Increased workload on other staff	64%
Increased operating cost	26%
Revenue loss	26%
Eroded customer satisfaction	19%
Loss of market share	19%

Area	Rank
Setback in product development	14%
Hindrance in meeting quality objectives	34%

Based on the information collected and looking at other external data from education test scores and candidate's resumes, the Virgin Islands Workforce System has to focus its talent development in the short term around high school diploma attainment, workforce preparedness and work-based training activities, on the job training and apprenticeship opportunities to meet the work experience deficit and be able to source the labor market with dynamic candidates.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

(2) Workforce Development, Education, and Training Activities Analysis

(A) The State's Workforce Development Activities

The Virgin Islands Workforce System is comprised of workforce and related programs from both WIOA core program partners and required one-stop delivery system partners. The agencies that make up the core program partners include: the **VI Department of Labor**, which administers the Youth, Adult, Dislocated Worker and Wagner-Peyser programs, the **VI Department of Education**, which administers Adult Education and Family Literacy programs and the **VI Department of Human Services** which administers the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

The Virgin Islands Workforce Board serves as the link between all interagency and partner organizations as well as employer-generated activities and programs. The Board is charged with system coordination, integrity and compliance, and continuous improvement. Each of the four core agencies is represented on, and is a voting member of, the Virgin Islands Workforce Board.

One-Stop Job Centers (American Job Centers)

The Virgin Islands One-Stop American Job Centers housed in each island district at the VI Department of Labor's offices serves as the hub of all employment and training activity. It is a job-driven system designed to simplify access to education, training and support services needed to attain employment. It is specifically designed to assist those with multiple barriers to attaining and maintaining employment by streamlining administrative functions and focusing on individual goal attainment. An expansive offering of career readiness and training services are available and may be accessed either virtually through the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (Views) at www.vidolviews.org or in person at one of the two Job Center branches. Services are available to both job seeker customers and employer customers.

The Virgin Islands Workforce System operates on the premise that everyone who accesses the system is seeking employment – either a first-time job or an advanced work opportunity. To achieve these goals individuals must be equipped with knowledge of their career interest area, the skill levels to perform at their desired point of entry, an understanding of the local work environment and the discipline to be effective and productive on the job. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides the framework through which these services are delivered. Job seekers have access to career services that prepares them for the workforce and training services that help them attain credentials in varying skill areas and follow up services to ensure career goals are met.

The Virgin Islands American Job Centers also serve as a portal to the business community. The Employer Engagement Team assists businesses, small to large, with solutions to their workforce needs.

Employers can schedule access to the Job Centers' facilities for screening, interviewing or providing workshops for their current or potential employees, they may request assistance with the administration of testing or career assessments, work with business service representatives to develop job fairs or information dissemination, post their job vacancies; or schedule hiring events. Employers can also take advantage of a range of business training solutions that help their employees ascend the career ladder within their organization. Those solutions include incumbent worker training that allows current employees to upgrade their skills or customized training for new and current employees who need to master a specific skill set.

The Virgin Islands Workforce System is made up of multiple programs offered by WIOA core and non-core partners who coordinate services to reduce duplication and ensure that all potential barriers are addressed. The core partners include Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth programs); Title II (Adult Education programs); Title III (Wagner-Peyser programs) and Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation programs).

Title I

Job seeker customers have access to services to include job readiness workshops and seminars, individualized career counseling, and job search, matching and referrals. Those customers requiring additional assistance in securing employment work with case managers to develop an individual service strategy (ISS) which identifies their employment goals and sets a path through educational services, work experiences, occupational skills training and support services to help each individual achieve that goal. Job seekers who are new to the world of work can test their newly developed skills through short term work experience or on-the-job training. Current labor market information can be accessed through the virtual system www.vidolviews.org and is used to ensure that training is aligned with locally in-demand occupations.

Additionally, job seekers who have been, or are about to be, laid off from their current employment have access to all workforce preparedness and training services. Through the

reemployment program they can rework their resume, hone their interviewing techniques and job search skills. If retraining is necessary, they are referred for occupational skills training in local demand occupation areas.

Youth customers have access to fourteen (14) program elements designed to develop the whole person with wrap around services that are connected to career development goals.

Title II

Customers who seek to obtain their high school diploma or equivalent are referred to Adult Education services offered by the VI Department of Education. Students can achieve their secondary level credentials through the traditional route – attending subject specific classes to earn credits (20 required); or by taking preparatory courses for the General Educational Development (GED) diploma which consists of a set of five tests: Math, Reading, Writing, Social Studies and Science.

All Adult Education students are assessed with the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Students who score 6.9 or below on the TABE are enrolled in skills classes. Basic Skills Enhancement courses are available for students who need goal-specific elementary or secondary level basic skills such as work-related math, functional literacy and reading or writing assistance. For English language learners, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes from the pre-literacy to the advanced level are available to help the adult learner develop

speaking, listening, reading writing and grammar skills to communicate effectively and function successfully with their workplaces and community.

Title III

Wagner-Peyser programs are also administered by the VI Department of Labor. The primary customers are job seekers who are skilled and ready for work or who have been in the workforce and are seeking employment change or advancement. These customers can either virtually or in person use the resources of the Job Centers to prepare/update their resumes; attend virtual or in- house workshops and seminars designed to enhance workplace etiquette; or attend short-term pre- vocational activities to enhance specific skill sets such as computer literacy, communication skills and interviewing techniques. Job search activities are generated through live labor market data and demand sector information.

Labor market information to include an analysis of workforce trends, economic indicators, labor market supply, income and wage data and occupation and industry profiles are a few of services available to employers using the Workforce System. Information is available either virtually through the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System www.vidolviews.org or through the American Job Center.

Title IV

Job seeker customers, who because of a disability may need additional assistance attaining employment, may be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services administered by the VI Department of Human Services. Once eligibility is determined through a comprehensive assessment, customers work with a VR counselor to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The services available include: vocational counseling, guidance and referral; vocational training; transition services from school to work; rehabilitation technology services; supported employment; and job search and placement.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program serves persons with various types of disabilities. Financial eligibility may be required to receive some purchased services.

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Required Partners

Programs offered by the required partners of the One-Stop delivery system include: the *VI Department of Labor* – Unemployment Insurance program; the *VI Department of Education* – Career and Technical Education programs; the *VI Department of Human Services* – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Senior Community Service Employment program; and the *VI Housing Authority* – Youthbuild, and Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) programs.

An expansive offering of career readiness and training services are available and may be accessed either virtually through the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) at www.vidolviews.org or in person at one of the two Job Center branches. Services are available to both job seeker customers and employer customers.

The Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) also helps increase reach for customers who prefer a self-directed system navigation style. Besides job search, customers can also post their resume, take advantage of numerous online work readiness courses, and access local research trends with real-time labor market information.

As with the job-seeking workforce, current agency workforce staff in each core, as well as non-core partner programs, have seen staff aging and retiring from employment While new staff is being recruited, the ability to address both job seeker and employer customer needs remains

challenging. The Workforce System seeks to address this by using customer service and employer engagement joint agency teams. To address customer training needs, local service providers offer a variety of approved training programs. Each program provides a nationally recognized certificate upon successful completion.

With a new One-Stop operator set to take place this year in 2020, the Workforce Development Board and our program partners anticipate enhanced service to the clients. This is well timed since in response to Covid-19, outreach to clients, will need to have an exponential increase. Much of the current approved training providers are also being encouraged to develop digital content so that training can still be provided in the event of a future pandemic/ lockdown situation. Online training will also provide a method for 24X7 learning offered by the traditional brick and mortar training partners.

(B) The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

Strengths

Single point of Operations – The base of operations for the Virgin Islands Workforce System has always been managed by a single entity – The Virgin Islands Department of Labor. It houses the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser and Unemployment Insurance programs. Program and fiscal staff interact consistently to align activities and services for both job seeker and employer customers. The LMI (Labor Market Information) unit is also in-house which facilitates access to real time data and analyses that drive decision making by the Board as well as Workforce Staff. The Department of Labor serves as the clearinghouse for all employment activities. By VI law (*Act 5174*) all employers must register their job vacancies with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor.

Small Community – The Virgin Islands is a small community; therefore workforce agencies and programs share the same customer base thus providing additional opportunities for alignment of activities and services. Partnerships and interagency activities are more fluid and translated through living Memoranda of Understanding – ensuring that the customer receives holistic support services while they progress along their chosen career paths.

Shared Common Goal – The main strength of the current workforce board and system as a whole is a greater sense of understanding the common goal as it relates to workforce development. No one saves the world alone and, in the past, it seems that though all program partners were well-skilled there was not an orchestrated effort moving in the same direction – no aggregation of resources. With the new team and momentum our greatest strength is in real collaboration. Also, the board is comprised of individuals that understand the nature of the situation from both sides. Having come from the same environments of the most at-risk individuals that the board and the program partners are charged with serving, actual impact areas and strategies can be targeted.

Weaknesses

Lack of Clear Measures—The biggest weakness has been not having a real-time measure on the effectiveness of workforce development activities. There is no single dashboard that exists detailing the measure of all program partners' progress and how many individuals are in the virtual workforce pipeline. To date, as a new Board there is a lack of understanding on the number of individuals with skills or strengths that are available to work, but just have not found a job. There is no way to know the best direction without knowing this data. As a traditional workforce development system, we are charged with developing new talents and strengthening the weaknesses of candidates. However, what if we have been doing this the wrong way? What

if we need to somehow identify the individual strengths of each individual and steer them to the training and paths that align with those strengths? It costs more to eliminate a weakness than it does to enhance a strength.

Limited Data Sharing – The partnerships formed with both internal and external partners of the Workforce System have not yet reached the point where technology bridges the gap.

Program Silos – The Workforce System has made great strides in collaborating with programs and partners to streamline access to services; however, many programs still operate in a vacuum once the common intake process is completed.

Better Utilization of Consulting Resources—Another weakness that has been observed as a new Board is lack of full accountability as it relates to workforce contractors/ consultants. From initial observation “Workforce Development” as we know it is big business. There are droves of individuals who claim to be experts, but in fact amount to merely marketing and well wishes. Similar to the analog marketing days, it’s hard to measure the effectiveness. These individuals know the lingo, programs, and processes of workforce development, but at times have no clue in placing someone in the right job, at the right time, with the right strengths. They themselves have probably never been unemployed (unless by choice). Most of the excuses these professionals provide in response to low results or not moving the needle, is that “the workforce is just not trained”, “we’re trying our best to reach them”, “They just aren’t responding”. Said and listened to long enough and you begin to realize there really is no expectation of change, just continuing the illusion of activity. But they get paid. Their employment is administering for the unemployed.

This year and in the coming years the USVI Workforce Development system will be reshaped to align and target where the need exists and focus on identifying and building strengths, rather than counting never ending weaknesses.

Island economy – The Virgin Islands is a single local delivery area; however, there are two districts in the Virgin Islands which are separated by forty miles of ocean. All services must be made available in each district in order for customers to have access to the full range of workforce services. This is true for the partner agencies and community organizations as well. This separation creates an inherent duplication in all services and activities proffered.

Employment base is limited – While job seeker customers may have career goals that are in keeping with the fast-moving global economy, those occupations are not often present or practical within an island economy where demand occupations are relatively static.

Inconsistency of service delivery between island districts – The flow of services and products offered between island districts, although expected to have some unique distinctions, are not consistent enough to create the image of a unified system. Customers are challenged to see the Workforce System as a single unit of operation.

Undue demand on Employers – The employer base in the Territory is comprised largely of small to medium sized business. Businesses in the VI have traditionally been good corporate partners, however, with multiple demands by multiple agencies and organizations on the same entities the element of fatigue takes its toll on even the most willing employer.

(C) State Workforce Development Capacity

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act continues to present a new vantage point for serving all customers of the workforce system. Previously focused on talent development, the WIOA system is job driven and focuses on developing talent with specific employment outcomes in local demand sectors as the goal.

The process of creating a Unified State Plan demonstrates the capacity of the US Virgin Islands program partners to effectively collaborate toward the common goal of workforce development.

With this collaboration we understand that with the limited resources each partner has at their disposal an aggregation of resources and sharing of data is the only path forward. No one saves the world alone and with the critical nature of the Virgin Islands workforce responding to cultural setbacks, natural disasters, and now a global pandemic, there is no choice but to work together.

The Virgin Islands has limited workforce capacity on these three main fronts:

1. There continues to be a crisis of skilled youth migrating from the territory either right after graduation or right after they have gained a marketable skill or trade.
2. With an aging population it can be difficult to retrain or re-energize someone to elevate in the workforce or enter the workforce.
3. There are not enough workforce development funds allocated to the territory, even with the aggregation of resources, commensurate with the level of impact that is needed to make actual change.

With these limiting factors, the Virgin Islands has a long road ahead. Unless more resources can be allocated to apply the proper pressure on our workforce pipeline, we will continue to move at a slow trickle – no matter how thirsty we are for change.

Many actions are ongoing, and the raw materials (potential workers) exist to develop a strong diverse workforce. However more needs to be done and those actions are driven by numbers, both financial and statistical. One of the features the workforce board hopes to develop with realization of the goals set forth in this plan, is the ability to state how many individuals are in our workforce development pipeline and at what stage they are. This will define what our capacity is at one level of the pipeline and provide tangible data to identify what is needed to move them through.

These critical issues must be addressed through the current system. At this time, the US Virgin Islands has two main One-Stop or American Job Centers (AJCs) located in each of the island districts. The AJCs are housed within the Virgin Islands Department of Labor offices with the core partner Vocational Rehabilitation and non-core partners SNAP and TANF maintaining a physical presence on a scheduled basis. Adult Education does not have a presence in the Job Center; coordinated referrals are done for literacy and GED training and testing. There are two Access Points, one in each island district, housed by the University of the Virgin Islands Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning S (UVI CELL) which are in close proximity to public housing communities. The Access Points serve as a point of registration into the Workforce System, point of access to information on career readiness, job opportunities and available training and a learning site for selected training.

The VI can address these issues by forging stronger partnerships with both core and non-core partners; the Workforce System has increased its capacity to reach more customers and provide them access to universal career readiness services at any location they first enter. System partners have created an orientation presentation that provides information on workforce preparedness in general and further broken down into each partner's role in the process. An accompanying handout with location and contact information for specific services will be available.

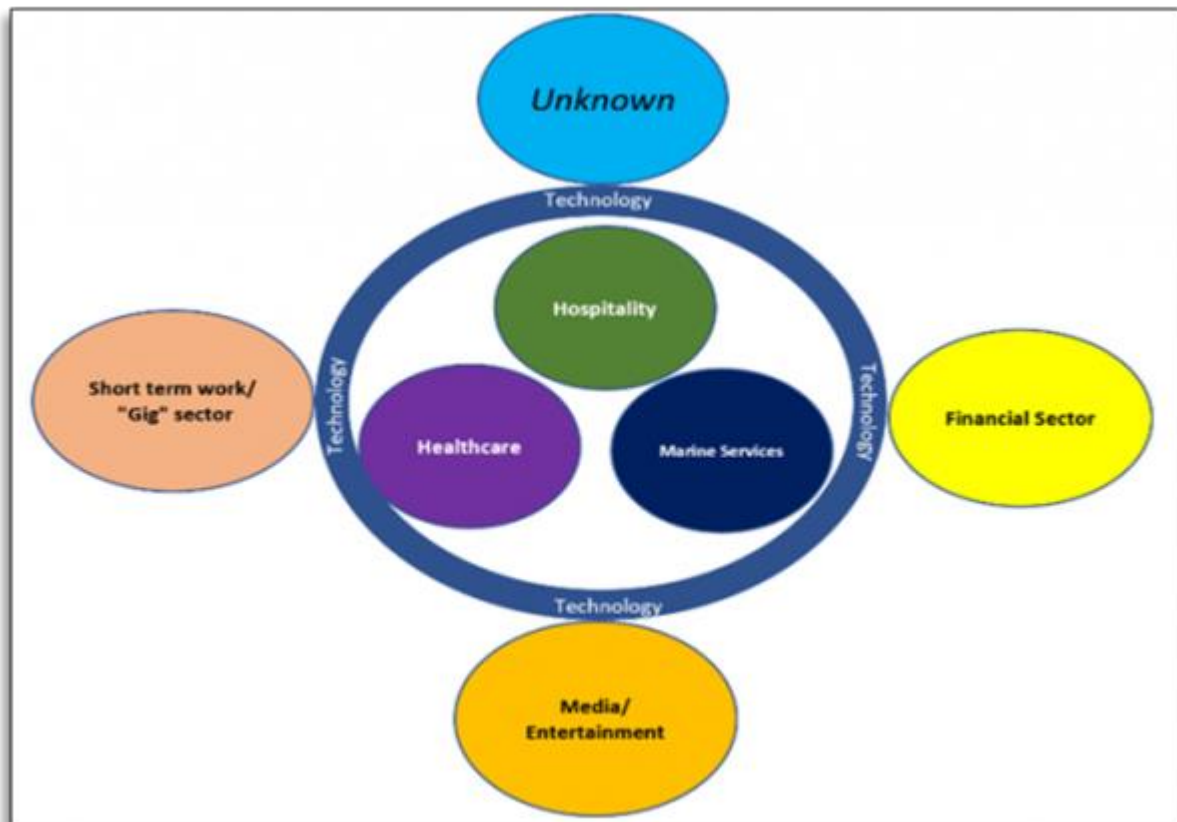
(b) State Strategic Vision and goals

The U.S. Virgin Islands' recovery is tied to a strong economy and a flexible workforce that supports its continued growth. Employment opportunities must be accessible for all job seekers, and available in industry sectors that promise a rewarding return for both the job seeker and the employer.

(1) Vision

The VI Workforce Development Board vision for the next four years is to create an unshakeable pipeline of talent and employment built to evolve with change and demand.

The vision seeks to create a Workforce Delivery System that promotes a dynamic collaborative between workforce agencies and business that is responsive to the growth and stability of the local economy. The System will connect to businesses by providing a full range of career development services that begins with building foundational and personal development goals, enhancing basic academic skills, and occupational skill proficiency that leads to the attainment of a post-secondary certificate or degree in order to find meaningful and progressive employment.



CORE INDUSTRIES

- a. Hospitality
- b. Healthcare
- c. Maritime
- d. Technology

SUPPORT INDUSTRIES

- e. Media/ Entertainment
- f. Short term/ Gig economy
- g. Financial Services
- h. Unknown

*Possible Unknown/ undefined occupation in response COVID-19 **Contact Tracer**. This occupation would be a cross between data analyst, customer service, and health care. *

B. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

(1) Goals

(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment and other populations.

(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

To achieve this vision, the Virgin Islands Workforce Board has developed the following go

Goal 1 – Enhance Business Engagement through a Sector-based approach to Workforce Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop program design in conjunction with the business sector needs. • Establish on-going work-based learning opportunities based on real time skills gaps expressed by employers. • In this age of diversity, through the Empowerment Initiative encourage and expand minority and diversity in business and employer engagement. • Create a USVI accepted skill validation certificate.
Goal 2 – Align Work-Readiness and Workforce Training Programs with Economic Development Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively prepare for new employers and emerging occupational opportunities. • Develop a signature work readiness product that stamps customer as "ready to work" through the workforce system. • Through the Siren Initiative expand communications among the workforce system to ensure response to worker and employer needs. • Through work-based training assist in developing Employer Permitted Training.
Goal 3 – Promote Diversification of Post-Secondary Education and Training Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore alternative and innovative methods of attaining credentials. • Foster new opportunities for online and blended learning options. • Through the +1 Initiative work with training providers to expand opportunities in the labor market. • Working with various partners, review and study the impact and development of family-based workforce needs to ensure increased retention opportunities. • Increase outreach to those with barriers including re-entry and others.
Goal 4 – Develop Focus Driven Sector Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reengineer the workforce system from the "street level". • Engage with hiring agents who assess job applicants for competency. • Encourage sector <i>expose</i> where employers present their business process and core occupations • Develop great awareness and response among job seekers through the Continual Movement Initiative to develop common career pathways aligned with sector strategies.
Goal 5 – Develop network for temp or "gig" economy workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Append current system and use AJC as central repository for bridging employer seeking day labor, short term projects, or intermediary jobs that will sunset in less than one year; • Encourage jobseekers to unify as talent groups in related occupations
Goal 6 - Develop an Integrated Data System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate agency operations through technology • Design electronic common intake tools • Manage customers through shared profiles • Partner with private sector entities • Promote employer services and consultations • Implement "The Pulse Initiative" and collect information comprehensively and regularly to ensure business information is complete. • Consider as part of the One Stop AJC system a referral or work crisis line for response.

(3) Performance Goals

Preliminary goals were determined for Title I, the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Title III Wagner-Peyser measures. Goals were set using data from the workforce and economic analysis previously described in this document, as well as past performance for the previous two program years. Performance goals were subsequently negotiated with the US Department of Labor and are reflected in Appendix 1.

Goals for Title II – Adult Education and Literacy - According to the Adult Education National Reporting System (NRS), the current baseline level for the VI Measurable Skill Gains of Title II AEFLA programs are 7% and 11% respectively.

The negotiated adjusted levels for the following categories:

2020-2021 Proposed Individual Targets		2021-2022 Proposed Individual Targets
ABE Beginning Literacy	37%	38%
ABE Beginning Basic Education	37%	38%
ABE Intermediate Low	37%	38%
ABE Intermediate High	37%	38%
ASE Low	37%	38%
ESL Beginning Literacy	37%	38%
ESL Beginning Low	37%	38%
ESL Beginning High	37%	38%
ESL Intermediate Low	37%	38%
ESL Intermediate High	37%	38%
ESL Advanced	37%	38%

Adult Education Family Literacy Act funded programs and participant activities will be recorded using a WIOA approved MIS System to capture Territorial Adult Education data.

According the VI State Assessment Policy for Measuring Educational Gains, evaluations will be based on level completions on standardized pre and post test results with evidence of literacy gains resulting from hours of instruction. Educational Functioning Levels have been adopted from the NRS and outcome measurements have been identified and defined in the State Assessment Policy for each level. [Measuring Educational Gains in the National Reporting System for Adult Education (34 CFR Part 462)].

(4) Assessment

The Virgin Islands Workforce Board will develop a comprehensive tool to evaluate all components of the WIOA workforce system, inclusive of all the core programs. This tool will be a formative evaluation tool that tracks activity throughout the program year and reports at quarterly intervals. The tool will be used to gauge:

- Overall functionality of the System
- Integration between core programs
- Interaction with non-core programs

- Use of Technology
- Customer satisfaction with workforce services
- Employer satisfaction with workforce services

The overall assessment will be based on the attainment of overarching goals set for the system.

C. STATE STRATEGY

(C) State Strategy

The analysis of the components of the Virgin Islands Workforce System, to include the Economic and Workforce Analysis; and the Territory's Strategic Vision and Goals led to the development of the following strategies.

(1) Strategies the State will implement, including industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations and career pathways, as required by WIOA section 101(d)(3)(B),(D)

Workforce development activities revolve around the build out of Industry sectors. The Territory's current demand sectors based on current hiring trends are:

INDUSTRY	OCCUPATION
Administrative and Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Staff • Program Managers/Administrators • Security Guards
Allied Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing • Home Health Care Attendants • Healthcare Technicians • Child/Senior Care Attendants • Dental Assistants/Hygienists • Behavior/Mental Health Professionals

Construction Trades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisors • Electricians • Carpenters • Masons • Welders • Plumbers • Alternative Energy Installers/Maintenance Workers
Information Technology (across industries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Analysts • Information Systems Operators • Fiber Optic Installers/Technicians • Network/Computer System Administrators
Leisure and Hospitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office Managers • Front Desk Clerks • Food & Beverage Service • Marine Service Workers
Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail Clerks & Managers
Transportation and Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy Equipment Operators • Warehouse Clerks & Logisticians

The sectors with the greatest local employment opportunities prior to the storms have not changed; rather, the shift occurred in the priority of demand. Whereas, the last few years offered more employment in leisure and hospitality sector and related areas, now the immediate needs of the construction industry in all trade areas has notably surged.

An immediately available and skilled workforce is needed for the rebuilding of homes and businesses, roads and ports, schools and hospitals. A working partnership has been established with the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR grant recipient), to provide training for job seekers, including Section 3 residents on rebuilding residential and business establishments. The Workforce System will address this need with a two-pronged strategy:

1. An employment triage that gives the least skilled workers short-term introduction to construction training that allows them sufficient knowledge and skills for entry-level positions.

Approximately, seven hundred individuals will be trained within the year. They will be equipped with general soft skills and safety training, basic knowledge of the construction industry and Level 1 training in a trade of choice – carpentry, masonry, electrical or plumbing.

Prior to entering the workforce, training participants will spend at least two-weeks either job shadowing or engaged in a work experience that gives them a practical foundation

2. Longer termed work-based training opportunities that allow for higher level training while employed

Participants who have had prior exposure to the construction trades or who have completed entry level training and are interested in continuing on this pathway will be able to do so while working. Through employer-based partnerships, job seekers can engage in on-the-job training or customized training where employers can use their preferred curriculum to train for the

specific skills needed for their area of service. Pre-apprenticeship training will be available for those participants not aligned with a specific employer during the training but, which is acceptable throughout the industry; and then segue into industry-based apprenticeships that strengthen the employers' team. This type of training will last from six months to a year or more depending on the trade. Approximately three hundred and fifty participants are scheduled to be trained within the first year with additional training becoming available as the demand rises.

Benefitting from widespread training in the construction trades is the Territory's oil refinery which closed in 2012 but is scheduled to come back online within the next two years. The basic skill set remains the same but is buoyed by skills in welding, pipefitting and scaffolding. This level of training requires significant classroom training prior to OJT's and/or apprenticeships.

Also, in preparation for the return of oil refining, advanced level training in information technology and process technology will be required. Training will be long-term and on-going. The workforce system continues to work with refinery employers and sub-contractors to ensure that training is industry appropriate, locally relevant, and timely.

The hospitality and retail sectors were hard hit by the 2017 hurricanes with 80% of the

Territory's hotels seriously damaged or destroyed. Most are scheduled to remain off-line until late 2019 and into 2020. Typically, training in the hospitality area can be accomplished with a quick turnaround period. A short-term career pathway plan that spans 4-6 months enables customers seeking employment in these sectors to engage in workforce activities that develop basic foundational competencies – *personal, academic and workplace* – while simultaneously receiving occupational skills training to acquire industry-recognized credentials in their desired field. A short-term work experience becomes an intrinsic part of this strategy, as does on-the-job training to assist participants in relearning their skills, and to support employers with soft openings as they strive to bring their establishments fully back online.

After the passage of the storms the majority of hotel and restaurant workers were displaced. The economy was coming back, then the Covid-19 Coronavirus impacted the hospitality and tourism industries. Many displaced workers sought employment in "non-traditional" occupations, with line cooks becoming brick layers and front desk clerks becoming traffic controllers. The interval between losing employment and regaining employment in the hospitality area will span more than eighteen months for most. The loss of time, plus the need for alternate employment, prevents individuals from honing their preferred skills; therefore, the Workforce System seeks to address this sector's development, not simply through basic courses for skills upgrading, but for skills refining – providing the opportunity to train for advanced skills and new certifications needed in tomorrow's workplace, thus giving job seekers a competitive advantage to recapture their place in the hospitality industry. Further, the University of the Virgin Islands offers a BA in Hospitality and Tourism Management for those job seekers who seek credentials in management and administration. Eligible participants can access this degreed program through the workforce system.

The career pathway to attaining industry recognized credentials in the administrative and support services and careers in the transportation and logistics sector requires a 6-12-month training period that allows for more intensive training coupled with on-the-job learning. Allied health and information technology sectors will see a training path that spans 9-18 months. All training offered starts with the basic foundational competencies to ensure a job seeker is equipped with life skills needed to perform on any worksite. On-the-job training, pre-apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeship options factor into the training offerings. Customers who embark on long-term strategies will have several off-ramps to seek full time employment at varying levels of competency – specifically, entry-level, intermediate or advanced.

The training strategies for each career path will be developed jointly by workforce professionals, educator/trainers and industry-specific experts to ensure that the training is timely, relevant and leads to portable industry recognized credentials.

The rise of the gig economy was increased by the current pandemic. From individuals who have lost steady employment to those who see gaps in the “normal” functioning of daily activities, those with employable skills/talents can and do create new work opportunities for themselves. However, to be successful and turn their talents into lucrative ventures, additional training and sometimes certification is needed. The workforce system is enhancing its entrepreneurial training options to support this growing avenue of work.

The gig economy coupled with advances in technology has changed the way we work. It also changes the way we prepare for the workforce. The brick and mortar establishments are institutionalized and will always have a role in workforce preparation; however, as the millennial generation followed closely by i-Gen or Generation Z becomes more prolific in the workforce, the tools needed to help them chart their path to success must include modern technology, as well as flexibility in learning.

Recognizing that the new workplace may exist in an environment previously unknown, it becomes apparent that training providers can no longer survive as stand-alone entities with a rigid curriculum. It is further recognized that it may take a network of providers to equip the new workforce with all the tools needed to be successful within an industry.

As the Virgin Islands Workforce System redefines and establishes itself as a contender in workforce preparation, evaluating the way training providers prepare the workforce will be revisited. A team approach consisting of industry experts, employers, trainers and workforce specialists will be tested in the development of new program designs with the intent of ensuring industry appropriate and relevant training for all.

(1) Strategies the State will use to align the core programs, required and optional one-stop partner programs, and any other resources available to the State to achieve fully integrated customer services consistent with the strategic vision and goals described above.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act focuses on providing opportunities for those individuals with multiple challenges that prevent them from entering the workforce. This includes out-of-school youth, adults/disengaged individuals without a high school diploma, individuals with basic skill deficiencies and individuals with disabilities, English language learners and the long-term unemployed.

The service strategies are broken into three tracks of development: Ready for Work; Job Assist; and Intensive Career Preparation.

Ready for Work – This group of individuals are ready for work. They may have already chosen their career path and are equipped with skills, credentials and some work experience, but are still having challenges connecting or reconnecting to employment. Through the Job Center customers have access to a variety of workshops that include, resume preparation, interviewing techniques and workplace etiquette. Self-directed programs that boost confidence and helps an individual learn to “sell their skills” are also available. Current job listings are always available which facilitates the search process. Customers can participate in these activities either on their own or with the assistance of a career counselor. If support services are needed both workforce and partner agency representatives are available to provide assistance. These customers are ready for work and with a little guidance can land their dream job.

Job Assist – These customers may have work experience but no specific job interest or skill level. Career counselors begin by developing an individual career plan that includes career assessments, academic competency level testing and career exploration and matching. Referrals to core and non-core partner programs are made and noted on the career plan to coordinate

activity intervals. Some customers on this track may be seeking retraining to advance their skills and/or credential level. Local LMI information is provided so that customers can make informed decisions about their career areas of interest and determine the time and effort needed to achieve their goal. Education and training opportunities are made available and customers choose the intensity of their path. Customers requiring this level of assistance may take 6-12 months to complete the foundational competencies and academic/training required to accomplish their goals. They will have access to job shadowing, on-the-job training, paid or unpaid work experience and transitional employment before they complete their regimen. Career counselors are available throughout their journey to assist and encourage. Once career credentials are earned, customers are assisted with finding unsubsidized employment.

Intensive Career Preparation – This track is taken by individuals who face significant or multiple barriers to employment. They may need preparation for a high school diploma or GED. Some may be English language learners who have a skill but have challenges functioning in a new environment. Others may have visible or hidden disabilities that can be successfully managed with a longer development plan. Still other customers may experience difficulty maintaining employment due to poor social skills or work habits. Customers who are served in this track will work with career counselors to map out and follow the same foundational to training path as other customers and have access to the same tools and activities; however, in addition to that they will have mentors that work with them throughout their time in the workforce system to give them the added encouragement they need to complete their goals.

Integration with Partner Programs – All tracks are available to core and non-core partner participants either through referral to the Job Center for services or through development of shared Individual Employment Plans.

Partners share in the provision of workshops in the *Ready for Work* track. Subject matter experts from both core and non-core partners to include TANF and SNAP offer workshops at the Job Centers that are available to all customers and may be scheduled through their IEP. Further, several workshops are developed with the “hardest to serve” customer in mind. TANF, SNAP, Vocational Rehabilitation and Reemployment customers are all required to participate in a “Getting Ready for Work” workshop series. Local Certificates of Completion are given to those who complete the series. The Business Services Unit which includes representatives from all program agencies advises employers to be on the lookout for these certificates to show which potential employees have benefitted from these workshops.

By offering a general orientation at which all partners provide information about the services available at both the Job Centers and at various entry points, customers are able to work with their case managers to develop a schedule that fits their individual needs. A common intake form that is shared among referred partners documents Basic Career Services to include eligibility determination, registration and initial assessments. This may be done by any partner

And includes a referral between partner programs; however, the System is working towards having all training opportunities listed in one service menu and available to all customers eligible to access training.

While some services are program specific such as GED testing which may only be provided by Adult Education staff, GED preparation programs are available at the Job Centers and through other eligible providers. Successful completers of the preparation programs may now sign up for testing through the Job Centers.

Addressing Weaknesses – Workforce partnerships among core and non-core partners have been formed during the planning phase of this document. Many of the discussions have focused on the challenges found and the solutions possible in building a unified system that is readily identifiable in each district because the services, activities and outcomes are similar. Partners will continue to meet periodically to review services and activities offered in the Job Center to

ensure consistency of services. Core partners will have access to *VIEWS* to facilitate case management of joint customers. Through an improved referral process pertinent data will be shared between partners to reduce duplication of intake information.

The employer engagement team now consists of representatives from all core partners in order to create a coordinated approach to working with businesses on projects and activities.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

III. Operational Planning Elements

(A) State Strategy Implementation

(1) State Board Functions

The U.S. Virgin Islands is a single State local area and has one Workforce Board that performs the duties of the State and Local Boards. The Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board (WDB) is comprised of twenty-seven members to include the Governor, Commissioners of the three workforce agencies — Labor, Education, and Human Services, the State Administrator for Adult Education and Family Literacy, the Administrator of the Vocational Rehabilitation program, representatives from the University of the Virgin Islands, Economic Development Authority and Workforce Development; representatives of local labor unions and majority representation from local businesses. A complete roster of VIWDB members can be found at the Workforce Board's website - www.viwib.org/board/members.htm.

The Board has three standing committees — Executive, Strategic Planning, and Operations. There is a Youth committee that operates as a sub-group of the Operations committee. Board members select committee participation based on their own personal strengths and potential contribution to the respective committee.

Private sector board members were selected based on their affiliation with local in-demand occupations. As sector strategies are built out, these board members will take the lead to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the workforce product delivered. Career pathways will be developed in a similar manner. The State Administrator of Adult Education and Literacy also oversees the State Career and Technical Education programs in the Territory and in conjunction with the Career and Technical Education Board, and local businesses have begun to align career pathway development with the local demand occupations to ensure a smooth transition from secondary school to post-secondary education or training.

The Virgin Islands Workforce Area consists of one region. Programs and activities developed for the delivery area are the same as that of the region. Tourism and hospitality is the overarching resource of the area and many businesses support it or feed into it thus creating one solid product. Through academic advancement, occupational skills training and workforce preparedness efforts, the Board seeks to align the Territory's workforce system with multifaceted requirements of meeting the regions' workforce demand.

The Direct Functions of the Board are as follows:

The State board shall assist the Governor in:

1. The development, implementation, and modification of the State plan.
2. The review of statewide policies, of statewide programs, and of recommendations on actions that should be taken by the State to align workforce development programs in the

territory in a manner that supports a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system in the territory, including the review and provision of comments on the State plans, if any, for programs and activities of one-stop partners that are not core programs.

3. The development and continuous improvement of the workforce development system in the territory, including:

a. The identification of barriers and means for removing barriers to better coordinate, align, and avoid duplication among the programs and activities carried out through the system.

b. The development of strategies to support the use of career pathways for the purpose of providing individuals, including low-skilled adults, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment (including individuals with disabilities), with workforce investment activities, education, and supportive services to enter or retain employment;

c. The development of strategies for providing effective outreach to and improved access for individuals and employers who could benefit from services provided through the workforce development system.

d. The development and expansion of strategies for meeting the needs of employers, workers, and jobseekers, particularly through industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

e. The identification of regions, including planning regions, for the purposes of section 3121(a) of this title, and the designation of local areas under section 3121 of this title, after consultation with local boards and chief elected officials.

f. The development and continuous improvement of the one-stop delivery system in local areas, including providing assistance to local boards, one-stop operators, one-stop partners, and providers with planning and delivering services, including training services and supportive services, to support effective delivery of services to workers, jobseekers, and employers.

g. The development of strategies to support staff training and awareness across programs supported under the workforce development system.

1. The development and updating of comprehensive State performance accountability measures, including State adjusted levels of performance, to assess the effectiveness of the core programs in the State.

2. The identification and dissemination of information on best practices, including best practices for-

a. The effective operation of one-stop centers, relating to the use of business outreach, partnerships, and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment.

b. The development of effective local boards, which may include information on factors that contribute to enabling local boards to exceed negotiated local levels of performance, sustain fiscal integrity, and achieve other measures of effectiveness; and

c. Effective training programs that respond to real-time labor market analysis, that effectively use direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure an individual's prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences, and that evaluate such skills, and competencies for adaptability, to support efficient placement into employment or career pathways;

3. The development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the State's one-stop delivery system.

4. Objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing the effectiveness and continuous improvement of one-stop centers.
5. Guidance for the allocation of one-stop center infrastructure funds.
6. Policies relating to the appropriate roles and contributions of entities carrying out one-stop partner programs within the one-stop delivery system, including approaches to facilitating equitable and efficient cost allocation in such system.
7. The development of strategies for technological improvements to facilitate access to, and improve the quality of, services and activities provided through the one-stop delivery system, including such improvements to-
 - a. Enhance digital literacy skills.
 - b. Accelerate the acquisition of skills and recognized postsecondary credentials by participants.
 - c. Strengthen the professional development of providers and workforce professionals; and
 - d. Ensure such technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities and individuals residing in remote areas.
8. The development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures (including the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, case management information, and performance accountability measurement and reporting processes and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation, to improve coordination of services across one-stop partner programs);
9. The development of allocation formulas for the distribution of funds for employment and training activities for adults, and youth workforce investment activities, to local areas as permitted.
10. The preparation of the annual reports.
11. The development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system.
12. The development of such other policies as may promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the territory.

The major workforce agencies are represented on the Workforce Board, and strategies to assist those individuals with barriers, including those with disabilities, are brought to the forefront and included in any plan proffered to increase access to the workforce.

(2) Implementation of State strategy

The lead agencies in the territory responsible for WIOA core programs included in this Unified State Plan are the **Virgin Islands Department of Labor, Virgin Islands Department of Education**, and the **Virgin Islands Department of Human Services**. To realize the Territory's vision and goals, the partners of the Workforce System have executed an MOU which signifies and formalizes the cooperation and data sharing between each system partner. Beyond the MOU a key portion of this integration amongst partners is the common intake standard.

This common intake will allow a client that is receiving or applying for services at any of the partner agencies to easily be referred or transition to another system partner without duplicate entry or time spent physically moving case data from place to place.

Agency and areas of responsibility:

Virgin Islands Department of Labor (Title I and III)

- Title I: Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth
- Title III: Wagner Peyser

Virgin Islands Department of Education (Title II)

- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

Virgin Islands Department of Human Services (Title IV)

- Vocational Rehabilitation

In order to realize the Territory's vision and goals the partners of the Workforce System have formed a "partner's workgroup" led by the SWDB director and made up of core agency program directors, non-core program directors, administrators and front-line managers. During the planning phase, the group met weekly to discuss areas of possible collaboration and streamlining of services. A splinter group comprised of program directors and front line managers also met once a week to discuss each programs' current operations and features of their individual system in order for each group to gain a better understanding of what each agency duties entailed.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

(2) Implementation of State strategy

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their individual system in order for each group to gain a better understanding of what each agency duties entailed.

B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

(A) Alignment with activities outside the plan

With limited resources, the Virgin Islands understands that to implement a sustainable workforce development system, outside partnerships and aggregation of Non-WIOA program resources must be attached to the workforce pipeline.

Some of these partners/ programs include:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program;
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
- Unemployment Insurance (UI);
- Career and Technical Education programs (CTE);
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) and
- Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs.

Having these outside resources integrated into the workforce pipeline helps to eliminate barriers to progress, such as limited access to housing, food and support services, are provided with options for addressing their most basic needs, as well as supplementing the needs that enable them to prepare for attaining unsubsidized employment. These resources help to break the cycle of an individual having what can be identified as much bigger issues than not being in the workforce, which are in fact a direct symptom of **not** being in the workforce.

Another point of collaboration between core partners and outside partners and programs is the apprenticeship program. The program offers businesses customized training through the development of career pathways. While being new to the apprenticeship program the Virgin Islands realizes the benefits, it has to offer once collaboration reaches a level of having multiple approved apprenticeship entities. With a vast number of apprenticeship programs, the territory will place particular focus on developing apprenticeships in areas with exponential growth with the possibility participants after the program being able to earn a living within the territory while delivering services beyond our borders.

Once such occupation with an approved apprenticeship pathway is Cyber Security. The Covid-19 pandemic has further exposed the shortcomings of an economy that has little representation of knowledge-based workers. With much of our workforce having occupations in the physical face-to-face economy during the pandemic, non-essential workers were unable to make a living. This is particularly true in the tourism and hospitality area. Driving apprenticeship in the Cyber Security occupation will allow for high paying jobs in a demand sector which is immune to quarantine and encourages remote tele-work. This occupation also drives development in other vertical markets such as Artificial Intelligence, Deep learning and other automations that can be paired with remote human representation. In addition, with a low barrier to entry almost any enterprise organization or public sector agency can develop a Cyber Security apprenticeship under guidance from nationally approved curriculum and delivery partners. There is no need to invest large sums of capital to get started. These organizations with existing infrastructure can respond and prepare for this global need.

C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

(A) Coordination, alignment, and provision of services to individuals

An individual service strategy will be developed for all customers seeking more than basic career services that include referrals to the core and one-stop partners for additional services. The referral connections are currently documented in the service strategy and followed up via points of contact in each agency and through email and telephone contact. In addition to the core partners, One-Stop partners TANF and SNAP also maintain a presence at the Job Centers facilitating the referral process to occur in real-time. Appointments can be set up on the spot, and customers benefit from making all their connections at one location. For those customers accessing the System from a non-job Center location, the universal referral form is used to ensure consistency and reduce duplication. Each core and partner program retains the integrity of its program requirements by having their staff perform the more involved services of their respective programs. Coordinated activity occurs at the onset and in the referral process. The Virgin Islands is working on an electronic solution to this connectivity to ensure a faster, more accurate response to customer needs. The Department of Human Services is currently in the contract negotiation process for an electronic case management system built from a platform that will directly interact and exchange data with the current VIDOL VIEWS system. This step will create automated sharing between the agencies. The Department of Education is currently investigating options to move their Adult Education and Career and Technical education data to a similar application, but there are some compatibility challenges with the current software platform. This is being managed accordingly and there should be a clear direction for their migration within a year of the approved State Plan.

D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

(A) Coordination, alignment, and provision of services to employers

With the implementation of Board goals in this State Plan data, data collection from employers will be enhanced exponentially and have a predictive refresh period. Once the data is collected communication can be curated which aligns with the employer responses and resources that are available via the core programs. This information will be disseminated quarterly via email and/or SMS, Employer Educational Forums/Seminars, Workforce newsletters, and on-site visits that will occur on a rotating basis to ensure coverage to all employers during a set timeframe. Having this level of interaction and feedback will allow for a constantly evolving strategy as it relates to workforce development. Some foundational information to be shared will cover topics such as Developing Sector Strategies, acquiring a Skilled Workforce; Hiring Workers with Disabilities; Recruiting through Job Fairs, and Workforce Expansion Strategies, to name a few.

Similar to the Partners Group noted previously, the Board will require the Title I Operator to enhance the current Business Engagement Team. The current Business Engagement team now consists of representatives from the core programs and some of the One-Stop partner programs. The joint agency team will conduct outreach to employers to provide information on the services and programs available to them through the Workforce System. A calendar of Employer Workforce events will be developed and posted at the Virgin Islands Department of Labor website www.vidol.gov with a link established at each core and partner agencies' website for easy access. Additionally, an interactive feature will be added to the website so that employers can voice their suggestions and concerns.

E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

(A) Partner engagement with educational institutions

The U.S. Virgin Islands does not have a community college; however, the University of the Virgin Islands with campuses in both island districts has been and continues to be an integral partner to workforce development; both through its assistance with program and curricula development and through the University's Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning or

(UVI CELL), it's community college unit that offers online and face to face courses developed specifically to fill the Territory's post-secondary skill gaps.

UVI CELL also maintains a physical location in each island district that border public housing communities; this has enabled them to act as access points for workforce delivery services outside of the Job Centers. Information dissemination and skill training occur at these sites when necessary to facilitate attendance by those for whom access to transportation is a hardship. Several career pathways to include the construction trades, business administration, and nursing begin with career exposure and coursework in secondary school that contains foundational and early occupational skills training and ultimately results in entry-level certification at high school graduation. The training continues through post-secondary at UVI CELL with higher-level industry-recognized certifications and at the University of the Virgin Islands with Associate, Bachelor, Masters and PhD degrees.

F. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

Partner engagement with other education and training providers

The Workforce Board has also partnered with numerous training providers who have expertise in training and development activities in in-demand sectors. These providers work primarily with the adult learner, including those with barriers to employment. All training providers are required to make available reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities. Career and Technical Education programs of study to include allied health, construction trades, information technology, and administrative and support services highlight the local offerings and work in concert with the business community to ensure the integrity of the programs. Adding to this list likely through registered apprenticeship will be the Cyber Security occupation. The providers are an important part of the career pathway for local demand occupations, specifically for the adult learner who is attempting to advance their education and skill levels while holding down a job. The providers offer flexible schedules and relevant training developed in concert with employer partners to ensure training is up-to-date and can result in industry-recognized credentials.

The opportunity for individuals who are underemployed will be enhanced with our goals related to improving work-based learning. The work-based learning training time will provide the opportunity for individuals working in the private or public sector but under employed, the ability to participate in training that will level-up their skill sets and capabilities.

All providers listed on the Territory's Eligible Training Provider List are available to customers from all partner eligible funding streams. The University of the Virgin Islands community arm UVI-CELL offers program certificate courses and related program certification for many of the demand occupations listed. Participants from all partner agencies take advantage of these opportunities as they are available Territory-wide. The services from private or community-based providers are available to partner agencies district-wide since many providers offer programming specific to the island where they are located.

G. LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS

Leveraging resources to increase education access

The Workforce Board, as well as the interagency partners will leverage existing Federal, State, and local investments by first aggregating the resources into one pipeline of training and development. Alone each program or resource does not completely drive scalable workforce development. However, when all resources are aggregated into one comprehensive program the impact is much greater. Once a pipeline is maintained and the proper pressure (funding) no matter the source whether Federal, private, or otherwise, will serve the purpose of developing the workforce. In addition, implementation of the Board's goals is a way of compounding additional resources to develop a more impactful result. In the Territory, workforce

development activity across the agencies is funded primarily through federal sources. With the limited WIOA lead resources, the replication of services to accommodate separate island districts presents a challenge. Maintaining a consistent quality of service is critical and needs to be closely monitored. This is an issue that will continue to be addressed at the Board and agency levels. Currently, all core partners utilize the services of the University of the Virgin Islands and UVI-CELL by funding eligible customers in programs of study (either degree or certificate) that meet their Individual Employment Plan and unique innate talents.

The Workforce Development Board will develop, in cooperation with the Governor and the Virgin Islands Department of Labor a process through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and related Resource Sharing Agreement or Operating Budget to ensure that funds are allocated accordingly.

H. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

(A) Improving access to post-secondary education

Realizing that our community has many individuals that have challenges with literacy or English being a second language the first step to promoting these individuals with the most need is to refer them to the Adult Education program. These community members contribute to the economy and are highly productive. However, to elevate beyond their current level of employment a higher level of literacy is required. As automation, artificial intelligence and the potential for impromptu pandemic quarantine, these basic jobs that do not require high levels of literacy will continue to deteriorate, in both number of jobs and level of pay.

The Workforce Board, charged with reviewing and approving training providers and their course offerings, requires that all training has an approved industry curriculum and delivers content sufficient for a student to take and pass a national credentialing exam. The Department of Education, through their Adult based Career and Technical Education program, offers a wide variety of post-secondary occupational skills training programs - many of which are on the Demand Occupation List and are available in both island districts to the general public. The road to literacy and advancement is not an overnight process and participants still need to earn a living while evolving. This works in conjunction with the Board's goal around the Development of a Labor and Skillset performance validation certificate (LSP Certificate). This goal seeks to offer a locally recognized certificate that recognizes an individual for years of work experience in cleaning, basic construction, mechanics other services.

The Board recognizes that the Virgin Islands Workforce Area has been historically challenged in meeting this credential attainment rate. As part of the evaluation process and re-establishing the roster of providers on the Eligible Training Provider List, the Board will strengthen the requirements for achieving this goal. With the hiring of the new Title I Provider, the Board will also place significant outcome requirements on the contract to help ensure success in this measure. The Board also appreciates Technical Assistance from the US Department of Labor and identification of effective practices from other areas to help meet and exceed this goal.

Customers whose first point of entry to the Workforce System is through TANF, SNAP, VR, SCSEP, or HUD are all provided information on training services at the orientation given at any door. Case managers or career counselors advise them on the steps needed through the development of their service strategies, and referrals are made accordingly, ensuring that all barriers are addressed before embarking on a training regimen. Having access to different avenues of training increases the opportunities for more customers to find training in their area of interest at different locations throughout the Islands.

I. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

(A) Coordinating with economic development strategies

The Workforce Board has engaged with Economic Development representatives throughout the Territory's planning stages to align the workforce vision with the economic goals. The Chief Executive Officer of the Economic Development Authority and the Executive Director of the Bureau of Economic Research have both been strong participants in the development of the State's strategy. These entities are developing a long term economic/workforce development strategy that encompasses the overarching goals and direction for rebuilding the Territory's infrastructure through strengthening its workforce and ability of the Territory to compete in the global economy. This planning group advocates a twenty-year strategy that allows for continuous learning, and advanced training in each of the current and emerging sectors. The workforce system is constantly seeking new tools and products to help bolster the viability of existing businesses, and new businesses are being recruited to the Territory that falls into the emerging occupations listing. The Board will continue to work with economic development and all other workforce development agencies and organizations to create varied and flexible opportunities in the local workforce area.

B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

State Operating System and Policies

(1) The State operating systems that will support coordinated implementation of the State's strategies.

The Virgin Islands Workforce System uses the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) as the overall tool for disseminating labor market information, driving data systems, case management for Adult, Youth, Dislocated Workers, and Wagner-Peyser programs and job search and listings.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy program uses LACES as its data management tool and to collect information needed for federal reporting.

The Vocational Rehabilitation program is currently acquiring a VR portal powered by the company that hosts the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS). This transition will offer optimum integration capabilities between Titles I, III, and IV, and allow for the facilitation of integrated case management.

All WIOA core and One-Stop required partners will have "view-only" access of common (non-confidential) data to the VIEWS operating system to align service strategies for customers. Partners will be trained to help customers with their initial registration on VIEWS from any location, and all have access to labor market information and job listings. Policies for the joint use of the operating system are being crafted.

1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF-

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2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE’S STRATEGIES (E.G., CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE’S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS’ CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

The State Policies that will support the implementation of the State’s strategies

The Virgin Islands Workforce Board has developed policies that support the foundational elements of the Territory’s strategy. Policies are disseminated as Workforce System Guidance (WSG) or Workforce Program Guidance (WPG). Policies include WIOA Title I Eligibility Requirements, Delivery of Services and Activities under WIOA, WIOA Training Provider Eligibility Process, Removal from the Eligible Provider List, and pg. 35 Grievance, to name a few. The development of policies and procedures that include the joint operation of core partners is still in progress. A listing of WIOA policies can be found on the WIB website at www.viwb.org.

An additional list of joint system policies being developed may be found in the Action Plan. The format for Joint Policies to be developed is as follows:

- Interagency program directors and managers determine that a joint process needs to be in place for a given service or function
- An interagency workgroup is formed to secure data and best practices
- The group develops recommendations to be considered by the Board
- The Operations committee of the SWDB meet to consider recommendations and finalize policy
- The SWDB issues a joint policy

Since the Virgin Islands is a single state local area, the SWDB issues policy directly to the One-Stop delivery system.

All partner programs participate in the joint policy development process to ensure the integrity of the system. Core programs in Titles I - IV take the lead in these discussions to ensure an accurate representation of agency/program-specific requirements.

The Adult Education programs are supported in part by the local Government of the Virgin Islands, which allows the Division to conduct a number of higher-level activities to help bridge the divide and allow learners within reach of their goals to achieve completion. An annual amount determined by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands is allotted to assist this effort.

3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

State Agency Organization

The Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands is the chief executive officer in the Territory. There are no local layers to the government structure such as mayors, councilmen, district representatives, or the like. The Commissioners of Agencies comprise the Governor’s cabinet. The Virgin Islands is a Single Local Workforce Area and has one State Workforce Development Board that also assumes the duties of the Local Board. The Virgin Islands Department of Labor

is the designated State Workforce Agency. There are two workforce centers in the Virgin Islands — one in the St. Thomas/St. John district and one in the district of St. Croix.

The agencies that comprise the public workforce investment system include the Departments of Labor, Education, and Human Services. The Virgin Islands Housing Authority, the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI), and its community development arm UVI Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning (UVI CELL) are semiautonomous but are integral partners of the public workforce system. The Virgin Islands Workforce Board and the Economic Development Authority comprise the advisory and policy development segment of the Workforce system. The Governor of the Virgin Islands provides the vision and the mission that the agencies and advisory boards must then translate into viable activities that become the product to which the business community and the jobseeker public avails itself.

The Workforce Development System in the US Virgin Islands comes together through the efforts of various government agencies. The VI Department of Labor administers the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. It also houses the Wagner-Peyser, Veterans, and Unemployment Insurance programs. The VI Department of Education administers the Adult Education and Literacy program as well as the Career and Technical Education program. The VI Department of Human Services administers the Vocational Rehabilitation program. It also provides non-core programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). Additional non-core programs that fall under the Workforce Development banner include the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program under the VI Housing Authority and the Community Development Block Grant — Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program administered by the VI Housing Finance Authority.

The Virgin Islands Division of Adult Education has established an agreement with the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services to deliver instruction and services to the clients of the Department of Human Services to facilitate Adult Basic Education instruction. ABE instruction with HHS is provided to eligible HHS recipients by Adult Education providers. These services are delivered by providers; however, HHS fund their eligible HHS recipient cohorts.

Each of these programs is staffed by agency personnel and adheres to agency-specific funding requirements but converge at the Job Centers for joint pre-employment workshops and career development activities. Training services are offered by shared Eligible Training Providers and may be funded in whole or in part by partner agencies through a coordinated service strategy.

B. STATE BOARD

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State Agency Organization

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I. MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

1. Membership Roster. Provide a membership roster for the State Board, including members' organizational affiliations

State Workforce Development Board

Business			
	NAME	TRADE	STATUS
1	Michael Carty**	Information Technology	Owner
2	Moleto Smith	Health Primary Care	Executive Director
3	Michael P. Hand*	Construction	Owner
4	Mario Austin	Retail/Restaurateur	Owner
5	Keith O'Neale	Transportation	Owner
6	Oriel Blake	Maritime	Executive Director
7	Samuel Rey	Hospitality	Owner
8	Brendan Anzalone	Allied Health	Owner
9	Tracey Sanders	Home Health	Owner
10	Peter Chapman	Research & Technology	Executive Director
11	Natalie Knight	Administrative Support	Owner
12	Flamon Lewis	Security	Owner
13	Leon Hughes	Information Technology	Owner
14	Nancy Torres	Retail	Owner
Workforce			
15	Ricky Brown	Organized Labor	
16	Sheryl Parris	Organized Labor	
17	Gary Molloy	Commissioner of Labor	
Education & Training Representatives			
18	Shirley Lake King	UVI Representative	
19	Racquel Berry Benjamin	Commissioner of Education	
20	Suzanne Darrow-Magras, PhD +	Executive Director, UVI CELL	
21	Nancy Callwood	Director of Adult Education & CTE	
Government & Economic Development			
22	Sharia Green	Vocational Rehabilitation	
23	Wayne Biggs	Economic Development	
24	Asiah Clendinen-Gumbs	GERS	
Other Members			
25	Kimberley Causey-Gomez	Commissioner of Human Services	
26	Javan James	Senator, Legislature	
27	Governor Albert Bryan, Jr.	Shauna Bass, Governor's Designee	
** Board	* Vice-Chair	+ Apprenticeship Representation	

The Commissioners of the three lead agencies with workforce programs sit on the Board. The Commissioner of Labor and the Assistant Commissioner of Employment and Training represents the Virgin Islands Department of Labor whose oversight authority extends to programs authorized under WIOA Title I including Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, and Title III the Wagner—Peyser program, and also the Unemployment Insurance and Veterans employment programs. The Administrator of Vocational Rehabilitation represents WIOA Title IV programs under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 — Vocational Rehabilitation. The Commissioner of Human Services represents Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), employment and training programs under Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965.

The Commissioner of Education and the State Director of Adult Education and Career and Technical Education represent adult education and literacy activities authorized under Title II of WIOA; they also represent career and technical programs and literacy services for youth and programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act in the Territory. All entities described have and will continue to be involved in the Workforce Development System.

II. BOARD ACTIVITIES

(i) Board Activities.

Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning The Virgin Islands Division of Adult Education has established an agreement with the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services to deliver instruction and services to the clients of the Department of Human Services to facilitate Adult Basic Education instruction. ABE instruction with HHS is provided to eligible HHS recipients by Adult Education providers. These services are delivered by providers; however, HHS fund their eligible HHS recipient cohorts. Each of these programs is staffed by agency personnel and adheres to agency-specific funding requirements but converge at the Job Centers for joint pre-employment workshops and career development activities. Training services are offered by shared Eligible Training Providers and may be funded in whole or in part by partner agencies through a coordinated service strategy. ---

--The State Workforce Development Board (VI Workforce Board) coordinates, develops, and maintains the overall workforce system integrity. In this multi-faceted system, Board diversity will provide continuity by aligning goals among agencies and organizations. Board members bring to the table expertise not only in their area of operation but also from their alliances with other organizations— for example, members of the State Workforce Board are active members of the Career and Technical Education Board, Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Group, Rotary Organizations, Chambers of Commerce and other community-based groups.

The VI Workforce Board, in consultation with the Governor, develops the State Plan. The Board is comprised of two major committees: The Strategic Planning Committee and the Operations Committee. All activities relating to the operation of the One-Stop service delivery system, information management systems, performance reporting, and general oversight of the statewide employment statistics system is managed through the Operations Committee. All activities related to Youth services are also performed by the Operations Committee. Strategic planning, policy development, and direction, community linkages, and cross-program alignment are under the purview of the Strategic Planning Committee.

The Board will work through its three primary committees to implement the functions of the Board. The Board and Governor are also planning to add additional subcommittees including Workforce Planning, Training & Resources and Planning & Compliance. Through the expanded

committees and leadership from the Governor, the Board will engage both Board members, staff and associates to implement and carry out these functions.

4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE PROGRAMS

(A) Assessment of Core Programs

The four WIOA core programs will adhere to the Performance Measures described in Section 116(b) of WIOA for Adults, Dislocated Workers, Adult Education, and Literacy, Wagner-Peyser, and Vocational Rehabilitation, as applicable by program requirements. Specifically:

- The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from program
- The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from program;
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from program;
- The percentage of participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent during participation in or within (1) year after exit from program;
- The percentage of program participants who during a program year are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are receiving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; and
- The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers.

Similarly, the primary indicators of performance for Youth, also in accordance with Section 116(b) of WIOA, shall be adhered to. Specifically,

- The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities or in unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after exit from program
- The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from program
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from program
- The percentage of participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent during participation in or within (1) year after exit from program
- The percentage of program participants who during a program year are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are receiving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; and
- The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers. The Virgin Islands is a single state local area and has no local jurisdictions. There are no additional measures that have been assigned to these programs.

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B. ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS

(A) Assessment of One-Stop Program Partner Programs

The One-Stop program partners will continue to evaluate and assess their programs in keeping with their individual program and agency requirements. In the first year of WIOA implementation, the partners' workgroup will research best practices for methods of One-Stop evaluation. The assessment will be put into effect immediately upon determination of the process.

C. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

(A) Previous Assessment Results

Due to the twin hurricanes of September 2017, which halted the flow of "normal" services and activities the Virgin Islands Workforce System has not been able to gather data to be used as a benchmark of the newly enacted system.

With staff changes at the Board and then the impact of the Covid-19 Coronavirus again impacting even more significantly the flow of "normal" services, data gathering was once again not possible.

A reevaluation of the resources, services and capacity of individual agencies as well as of the system as a whole will be conducted prior to the development of an evaluation and assessment roll out plan.

D. EVALUATION

(A) Evaluation.

The Virgin Islands Workforce Board, in conjunction with the WIOA core agencies, will revisit the process for evaluating the effectiveness of core programs. The focus will be continuous improvement activities. This evaluation will be facilitated by regular data collection by way of evaluations and surveys of clients and employers. Annual reviews of the one-stop service centers will also be implemented. Evaluation process will take into consideration the overall activity of the Workforce System; the integration of core agency programs, on-site One-Stop partner programs, the referral process for partner programs that are not on-site, the effectiveness of service delivery to the job seeker customer, the effectiveness of service to employers and the overall return on investment to the System.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

I. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

Title I Programs

The Virgin Islands is a single state local area. There are no local areas as described in WIOA section 128 (b) or section 133 (b). Funding is not distributed beyond the State Agency – Virgin Islands Department of Labor.

II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

The Virgin Islands is a single state local area. There are no local areas as described in WIOA section 128 (b) or section 133 (b). Funding is not distributed beyond the State Agency – Virgin Islands Department of Labor.

III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

The Virgin Islands is a single state local area. There are no local areas as described in WIOA section 128 (b) or section 133 (b). Funding is not distributed beyond the State Agency – Virgin Islands Department of Labor.

B. FOR TITLE II

I. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL AWARD MULTI-YEAR GRANTS OR CONTRACTS ON A COMPETITIVE BASIS TO ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS IN THE STATE, INCLUDING HOW ELIGIBLE AGENCIES WILL ESTABLISH THAT ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS ARE ORGANIZATIONS OF DEMONSTRATED EFFECTIVENESS

General Procedure for Funding Eligible Providers

The Virgin Islands will provide successful agencies with a 25% starting of their respective funding awards during the initial quarter of service and continue with quarterly draws in increments of 25% upon receipts of expenditures and verifications of services rendered.

Applications

The VI Department of Education will run an open and competitive grant process for funding with adult education services. Eighty-two-point five percent (82.5%) of the federal allocation for grants will go to local entities providing adult education services. Eligible Applicants for these funds include (1) local educational agencies; (2) community-based organizations of demonstrated effectiveness; (3) volunteer literacy organizations of demonstrated effectiveness; (4) institutions of higher education; (5) public or private nonprofit agencies; (6) libraries; (7) public housing authorities; (8) nonprofit institutions that are not described in any of these descriptions and have the ability to provide literacy services to adults and families; and a consortium of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described in items (1) through (8). Community-based organizations and nonprofit institutions including nonprofit faith-based organizations. Public Notice of Availability and a Public Notice of Process will be distributed and advertised in the local media and related agencies. Eligible providers will also be verified against SAM.gov listing.

Request for Proposal Readers (Grant Reviewers)

A Public Notice to solicit the services for Grant Reviewers will be published in local media. Objective and Qualifications, Compensation, Scope of Work will be listed in advertisements.

The VI Department of Education, under the provisions of the Adult Education Family and Literacy Act, will consider eligible providers seeking grant funding within the guidelines set forth in the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act.

Applicants will include a descriptive narrative of the use of funds, which will be consistent with Title II of AEFLA. Particular attention will be given to details of program and service alignment and how they will achieve measurable outcomes. Successful Agency providers must agree to attain State set levels for the performance of primary core indicators set by Federal and State Plans. Provider activities will be carried out through the One-Stop Delivery System with recommendations from the Workforce Investment Board.

Eligible providers will be assessed on past demonstrated effectiveness to deliver services and effect significant educational student gains. Applicable local laws governing commerce, licensing of sub-grantees, and reporting will be in effect throughout the duration of the multiyear grant.

A request for Proposal (RFP), including an application packet, will be prepared and a public notice will be given to the general public to further assure equity among applicants and interested parties. All submitted entries post marked or submitted in person and time stamped within the appointed date, will be reviewed and sent to the Virgin Islands Workforce Board for additional review. The RFP process will be subject to the Procedures outlined for the Virgin Islands Department of Procurement as well as the Virgin Islands Department of Education.

All interested responsive parties will receive an application packet with instructions for preparation of the application and procedures for submittal to the designated Division of Purchases. The deadline will be advertised to all as prescribed. All grants are date stamped at the Division of Purchases and logged in by the Purchases Staff. The grants are then picked up by a VIDE designated staff member and teams or readers are assembled to read and rate the proposals based on a common evaluation tool which assigns numerical values to essential elements of the proposal. Grants reading teams are made up of representatives from the Virgin Islands Department of Education, educational consultants, and other stakeholders.

As in the past, the Virgin Islands procurement will make awards according to 334 CFR 463 Part C. The Board looks forward and appreciates Technical Assistance in this area as offered and available by the appropriate Department.

II. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO APPLY AND COMPETE FOR FUNDS AND HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS USING THE SAME GRANT OR CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS

(ii) Describe how the eligible agency will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers to apply and compete for funds

All interested responsive parties will receive an application packet with instructions for preparation of the application and procedures for submittal to the designated Division of Purchases. The deadline will be advertised to all as prescribed. All grants are date stamped at the Division of Purchases and logged in by the Purchases Staff. The grants are then picked up by a VIDE designated staff member and teams or readers are assembled to read and rate the proposals based on a common evaluation tool which assigns numerical values to essential elements of the proposal. Grants reading teams are made up of representatives from the Virgin Islands Department of Education, educational consultants, and other stakeholders.

Evaluation of Application

Teams use an evaluation tool with specific criteria to determine whether the proposed applications will meet Virgin Islands Department of Education with specific criteria to determine whether the proposed application will meet Virgin Islands Department of Education quality program standards as well as the USDOE requirements set forth in Section 231 of Title II of the Workforce Investment Opportunities Act. All proposals must also submit a reasonable budget with at least a 10% local match. Applications will be read and rated a minimum of three times by trained grant readers. No grant will be funded unless it has met a minimum score of 70 points.

The Virgin Islands State Office for Adult Education will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers by reinstituting its policy for the selection of prospective applicants as defined in WIOA guidelines. Additional guidance as outlined in (VI.B.)

All proposals must be returned to the VI State Office for Adult Education with WIB recommendations for final review and selection of providers.

The Eligible providers will be selected through a review process of the State Office for Career, Technical and Adult Education and the Virgin Islands Workforce Board. Assurances must be

given by the successful applicant that receives the grant funding that they will conduct classes that provide adult education and literacy activities including programs that provide such activities concurrently. Reference [Section 463.20(b)]

Additionally, successful applicants will be apprised of the Target Performance categories and data as well as NRS Tables which outline areas of concentration.

Efforts will be made to strengthen information gathering of student goals for education and employment and Exit Data and follow up to facilitate the ultimate goal of client employment.

The same announcement, application and process will be used for all applicants for each RFP that is issued.

C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

B) Vocational Rehabilitation Program

In the case of a State that, under Section 101 (a) (2) (A) (i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

The Virgin Islands has one designated State Agency that is responsible for serving all individuals with disabilities within the state. Funds are not distributed to two different agencies. Many states across the US have separate agencies for persons who are blind and in some instances individuals who are deaf. The Virgin Islands has a "Combined" agency and serve all disability types. Vocational Rehabilitation has sufficient funds to serve all eligible individuals who apply for services at this time.

6. PROGRAM DATA

A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

The VI Department of Labor administers all programs in Titles I and III as well as Unemployment Insurance and Veterans programs. The Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) manages the program and performance data for Titles I and III. Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation is in the process of acquiring a management information system and considering the option of adding onto the VIEWS system.

This integrated data system would benefit both customers and staff by streamlining redundant operations such as intake and creating more effective customer service strategies. Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy uses the Power School system to gather data and customer information. It does not currently align with VIEWS but options to do so are being explored. Until then, Adult Education customers are generally also customers of Title I, III or IV and information will be picked up as customers touch these other programs. Common intake and basic data collection occur through an updated referral system. This ensures that staff of all programs know where a customer's journey begins, why referrals are made, how they are made and what services are expected by means of the referral. There are plans to acquire a universal tracking system through VIEWS that customers access upon entry into the Workforce Centers, which automatically documents the purpose for the visit, and outcomes achieved during each visit. Final outcomes can be traced back to the point of entry into the workforce system and all programs that touch an individual will receive the benefit.

The Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board will continue the coordination with other state plans consistent with the previous plan as they explore and establish an improved effort as noted in the paragraph below.

The Strategic Planning Committee of the Virgin Islands Workforce Board in conjunction with representatives from the Office of the Governor will hold a series of planning sessions to update the State Strategic Vision and Goals. The Virgin Islands Planning Workgroup will comprise of directors and managers of the Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Family Literacy, Vocational Rehabilitation, SNAP, TANF and Paternity and Child Support programs. The group will meet weekly beginning in March of 2021 to operationalize the vision and goals described by the State Board. Past partners planned activities have led to the co-location of Vocational Rehabilitation, SNAP and Child Support programs in the One-Stop to the development of common intake processes and data integration. Programs from Titles I and III are now co-located at the One-Stop centers. The group will meet to further develop, resolve and improve any joint initiatives.

All participants will traverse the Workforce System by means of a wholly developed service strategy that accounts for the linkages needed from all relevant partner agencies and programs prior to successfully exiting the system. Customers who choose to continue on to advanced post-secondary education and/or enter or remain in employment will be assessed using WIOA performance measures as described in section 116. The State lead agencies will meet to determine the needs and set any additional indicators of performance.

B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

All participants will traverse the Workforce System by means of a wholly developed service strategy that accounts for the linkages needed from all relevant partner agencies and programs prior to successfully exiting the system. Customers who choose to continue on to advanced post-secondary education and/or enter or remain in employment will be assessed using WIOA performance measures as described in section 116. The State lead agencies will meet to determine the need for or set any additional indicators of performance in March 2021.

C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

(A) Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data

The Virgin Islands Unemployment Insurance program is housed at the VI Department of Labor along with WIOA Title I and III programs. This information has been historically collected quarterly and managed through the MIS unit to determine performance and conduct LMI analyses that are consistent with Federal and State law. The information is used for making assessments of current workforce for planning purposes, structuring programs and analyzing the demographics of UI claimants. It is also used to improved re-employment strategies for claimants – determining how long and/or often they receive benefits and return to seek other employment options. On the LMI side, wage record data is used in analysis of industries and sectors as they expand or contract, used for more in-depth look at occupational staffing patterns and for analysis of workforce development for economic growth and development

AEFLA and Vocational Rehabilitation programs are receiving technical assistance from their respective federal agencies. Accommodations have been made for both programs to submit wage record inquiries to the VI Department of Labor which houses the UI program. The VI Department of Labor will provide responses to the respective programs within a 7-day period.

D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

The Virgin Islands adheres to privacy issues as described in section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act. There are data sharing agreements between the agency partners. Internal policies will be put in place to safeguard the sharing of personal information among staff and customers.

7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

(5) Priority of Service for Veterans

In accordance with the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002, the VI Workforce System offers covered Veterans and eligible spouses 'Priority of Service'. The designation requires that these individuals are given first consideration for program participation and they receive access to services ahead of "non-covered" persons or, if resources or space is limited.

In order to receive Veterans Priority of Service for a specific program, a Veteran or eligible spouse must meet the statutory definition of a "covered person" as well as any other statutory eligibility requirement applicable to the program. Additionally, 'Veterans Priority of Service' designation shall take precedence before applying WIOA Priority of Service for recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and those who are basic skills deficient. Further, it is also required that staff and partners inform Veterans and eligible spouses of the full array of employment training and placement services available; and, applicable eligibility requirements for other programs and services. Informational pamphlets and other methods of promoting the Priority of Service provision will also be utilized to ensure that this mandate is executed.

In an effort to ensure that the 'priority of service' as established by the Jobs for Veterans Act is provided to veterans, there is Priority of Service signage in the lobby of the AJC. The question regarding each customer's veteran status is included on the initial registration form and the electronic registration system which is used by the WDS. Once the customer's status is confirmed the AJC staff will extend the priority provision as follows:

- A sign is posted on one of the entrance doors to inform customers of "Priority of Service for Veterans" and indicates to the customers, if they are a veteran or spouse of a veteran, they should identify themselves to the greeter. All of our team members are aware that veterans and their spouses receive services over any non-eligible person when accessing One-Stop services.
- A sign is posted in the resource room designating a computer for veterans and eligible spouses granting rapid access to a printer and phone. Also, any new job announcement added to the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) is placed on a 24-hour veteran hold. This grants the veterans exclusive access to views in order to apply for positions before the job announcement is released to the general public. Job postings are emailed to vets as soon as they are posted
- The Virgin Islands Department of Labor's website has been updated to display a Veteran Services banner and Veterans' Employment Services quick access link on the main page. Facilitating the website's navigation by providing a viewable and easily accessible banner. The Veterans Employment Services page was updated to indicate the new guidelines imposed by the Veterans Employment & Training Services to the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program. These changes allow Veterans to easily navigate the Virgin Islands Department of Labor's website and swiftly locate a synopsis of the Veterans Employment Services and the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program prerequisites.

DVOP Program

Veterans who meet the eligibility criteria as defined in 38U.S.C. Sub Section 4211(1) and (3) are identified and referred to Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists for intensive services. These specialists provide case management services to veterans and eligible spouses of Veterans with 'significant barriers to employment'. Veterans' eligibility for these services includes:

- A special disabled or disabled veteran, as those terms are defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(1) and (3);
- Homeless person, as defined in Section 103(a) and (b) of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a) and (b)), as amended; •

- A recently separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(6), who has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months;
- An offender, as defined by WIOA Section 3 (38), who is currently incarcerated or who has been released from incarceration;
- Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate;
- Low-income individual (as defined by WIOA at Section 3 (36)
- Veterans 18 – 24; and
- Vietnam era Veterans.

Eligible spouses' eligibility includes:

The spouse of a veteran who has a total service-connected disability,

- Is Missing In Action,
- Captured in the line of duty by a hostile force,
- Is a Prisoner of War or
- Who died from a service-connected disability

In accordance with the authorization provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014, the following populations are eligible to receive DVOP services.

- Transitioning members of the Armed Forces who have been identified as in need of intensive services;
- Members of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition units; and
- The spouse or other family caregivers of such wounded, ill, or injured members.

Partnerships

In an effort to assist veterans to overcome their Significant Barriers to Employment, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Specialist will collaborate with Veterans Organizations and community-based organizations such as:

- The Methodist Training & Outreach Center
- Catholic Charities
- Bethlehem Shelter
- Eagle's Nest Shelter
- My Brother's Table Soup Kitchen
- Veterans Affairs Clinic
- Salvation Army
- Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation
- Local Office of Veterans Affairs
- Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR)
- Virgin Island National Guard State Family Program Office

- Women/Men's Coalition
- University of the Virgin Islands and the UVI Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning

One Stop Career Center staff and partners are aware of the policy and procedures addressing priority of service for veterans. This notification is also posted in our Center lobbies and the process is monitored by the Program Administrators through periodic on-site reviews and evaluation of our quarterly ETA 9002 reports.

Under the Wagner Peyser program veterans receive preference for all new job postings received within the System and are afforded preferred access to a range of other services. Application of this designation and requirement is monitored through the VIEWS database and is evidenced by the established 72 hour "vet hold" on each job order.

All staff are provided with a range of comprehensive information on the services available through the WIOA program and are prepared to disperse to the veterans they serve. Additionally, the DVOP specialists are fully integrated into the American Job Center and all staff are aware that veterans identified or self-attesting to meeting one or more of the criteria defined to signify a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE), are eligible to receive individualized services from the DVOP. Once eligibility is established, the veteran is referred to the DVOP and this activity is also recorded in the database.

The VIDOL will dedicate staff to implement this effort. In addition to cross-training to all staff (and other partner staff), VIDOL will prioritize the hiring of appropriate staff and/or prioritize staff capacity to address the needs of all veterans with emphasis on disabled veterans.

Veteran's Referral Protocol

The Military Veterans' Customer Flow chart provides a visual representation to JVSG and non-JVSG staff about the veterans' referral process.

Veterans who walk-in and require staff assistance are registered and provided with an orientation on the Workforce System. The veterans are also provided with an intake form which indicates the various Significant Barriers to Employment. According to the responses on the intake form, veterans are either served by the AJC staff or referred to the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist for service. Only veterans with SBE are referred to and are served by the DVOP.

DVOP also receive referrals from other community partners who are serving veterans with SBE. Eligibility is determined through assessments.

Veterans who apply for Unemployment Insurance have to register with the Workforce System. If the veteran self-registers, he or she will be asked a series of questions through the online registration that will determine if he or she possesses a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE). If the veteran does possess an SBE, the DVOP Specialists will receive an email alert indicating that a qualifying veteran registered on Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System. Follow-up action will then be initiated by the DVOP.

8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

(5) Address the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for individuals with disabilities.

The Department will provide whatever reasonable assistance may be deemed necessary to assure programmatic and architectural accessibility including, but not limited to ensuring that:

- Customers and staff with disabilities will be provided access to assistance deemed necessary to accommodate their needs, including assistive technology and alternate barrier-free work locations
- Assistance to disabled customers to include testing (if applicable) and placement support is reasonably accessible. Such services and support may include providing interpreters, readers and other accommodations deemed necessary.

9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

(5) Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for individuals who are English Language Learners.

The Virgin Islands has a diverse population with a high concentration of individuals whose first language is Spanish or French Creole. The Adult Education program has program locations in both districts that address language learning. Through an agreement with Vocational Rehabilitation many of these programs are made accessible for individuals with learning and other disabilities. As core partners, these programs will be included in the menu of services when preparing individual career plans for each customer.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Coordination with State Plan Programs

The Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board will continue the coordination with other state plans consistent with the previous plan as they explore and establish an improved effort.

The Strategic Planning Committee of the Virgin Islands Workforce Board in conjunction with representatives from the Office of the Governor will hold a series of planning sessions to develop the State Strategic Vision and Goals. The Virgin Islands Planning Workgroup will comprise of directors and managers of the Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Family Literacy, Vocational Rehabilitation, SNAP, TANF and Paternity and Child Support programs and will meet weekly beginning in March 2021 to operationalize the vision and goals described by the State Board. The partners planned activities have led to the co-location of Vocational Rehabilitation, SNAP and Child Support programs in the One-Stop to the development of common intake processes and data integration. Programs from Titles I and III have been co-located at the One-Stop centers. The group will continue to meet until all details on joint implementation have been resolved and then will continue to meet thereafter on a monthly basis to ensure continuous improvement.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	Yes
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes
10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas

Identify the regions and the local workforce development areas designated in the State

The US Virgin Islands is a single state local workforce development area. Its population is approximately 104,000. There are two major Island districts that house two physical One-Stop Centers in order to accommodate access for all individuals. Services in each district including with all core and non-core partners mirror each other. The Virgin Islands operates as a single Region.

As a single state local workforce development area there are no local areas or separate regions designated.

There is no process required.

There is no process required.

2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for use of State funds for workforce investment activities.

The policies and guidance for the workforce development system can be found on the Virgin Islands Workforce Board website at www.viwib.org.

The set-aside funding will be broken into two categories – system evaluation and innovative programming. The system evaluation piece will assess the entire system for effectiveness and be used to gauge continuous improvement. The evaluation is still being developed but will be available for use by the end of the first year of implementation. Several options for innovative activity are being explored by the Workforce Board at this time to include alternative methods of providing foundational workplace skills with credentials.

The VI Department of Labor and other agencies in the Virgin Islands central government partner with the local Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) to coordinate responses to natural disasters. The VI Department of Labor is currently updating its policies for addressing natural disasters and will include the role of Rapid Response in its development. This policy will be forwarded to the US Department of Labor for review as soon as it is approved.

The Virgin Islands does not have a Trade Adjustment Assistance program.

Rapid Response funds will be used to supplement employer engagement efforts in response to lay-off aversion strategies. Employers will be made aware of this option through public service campaigns by literature or media or in general orientation to workforce services either by visiting the VIDOL website or through informal interaction with a business service representative. A business service representative may contact an employer known to be going through a hardship to initiate this discussion or such employer may make contact through the One-Stop Centers.

B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

An employer or group of employers may request funds for Incumbent Worker Training as part of a layoff aversion strategy caused by undue economic hardships within a given sector or because of significant changes in the nature of an industry. Incumbent worker funds are solely for the purposes of providing training that upgrades employee skills levels or introduces new occupational skills required for an employee to remain effective in his/her position.

The training involved may include a mix of classroom training, technology-based learning and on-site training. Since the audience is already employed training will be industry specific and may occur wholly at the workplace. Training should be on an advanced level and result in either

employer and /or industry recognized credentials. Professional level certification (where applicable) resulting in degree attainment is sought for professional services.

Incumbent workers may be eligible to receive additional One-Stop services consistent with possible job disconnection. Since training will take place as a layoff aversion strategy, it is possible that a lay-off or partial lay-off may still occur. To ensure that workers are prepared for any type of transition, they may have access to workshops on Resume Enhancement, Budgeting, and Time Management.

Incumbent worker customers may also have access to career counseling to help them identify 'next steps' in building careers. This will allow them to define skill sets, especially those that may be transferable to other occupations, and restructure their career goals to include additional/advanced academic or occupational skills training.

Additionally, incumbent workers have access to general One-Stop services to include information on Unemployment Insurance, Job Search and Training activities.

2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

(1) Work-Based Training Models

The use of work-based training is integral to the Virgin Islands' workforce development strategy. As the local workforce system continues to determine sector strategies and build career pathways a work based learning experience will be required for most participants specifically those who have had little to no previous experience in the workforce – out-of-school youth and adults with barriers. These customers can expect to have a six to twelve week work experience built into their career plan that allows them to put into practice the foundational workplace skills and/or occupational training that they have just acquired. Customers who have had some exposure to the workplace already such as older youth and dislocated workers are prime candidates for on-the-job training. These strategies allow both job seeker and employer customer the opportunity to provide hands on training in specific occupational areas which facilitates the long term commitment of both to advance on the job. It is expected that those who participate in on-the-job training will remain in that sector, possibly with the same employer for a time.

(2) Registered Apprenticeship

The Virgin Islands Department of Labor is now a registered apprenticeship Agency.

(3) Training Provider Eligibility Procedures

The policy and procedures for Training Provider Eligibility (Initial and Continued) can be found at the Workforce Board's website www.viwib.org under the tab – Plans, Performance and Reports.

(4) Priority of Services for Public Assistance and Low-income individuals

WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(E) establishes priority to recipients of public assistance, other low income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient for receipt of career services and training services. The policy and procedures for the delivery of services and activities can also be found at the Workforce Board's website.

Adult Priority

Priority of services shall be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient for receipt of career services and training services.

The Virgin Islands has always given priority to individuals who fit this definition. The electronic case management system defaults to this target group for determining eligibility. In addition, the VIDOL's monitoring team reviews all contracts, ITA's and agreements to ensure priority is given to this target group.

3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

Training Provider Eligibility Procedures

The policy and procedures for Training Provider Eligibility (Initial and Continued) can be found at the Workforce Board's website www.viwb.org under the tab – Plans, Performance and Reports.

The Board is currently reviewing as part of the approved or pending waivers the collection of all data related to the Training Provider Eligibility. Once this is in place the Board expects to increase the number of providers, both traditional and virtual as well as Apprenticeship Programs and providers effective with the start of the next program year. The Board will consider a "substantial violation of the requirement to timely and accurately submit all required information" as a significant part of the new policy as it is adapted and applied at the start of the upcoming program year.

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE PRIORITY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS, OTHER LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF WIOA SEC. 134(C)(3)(E), WHICH APPLIES TO INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES FUNDED BY THE ADULT FORMULA PROGRAM

) Priority of Services for Public Assistance and Low-income individuals

WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(E) establishes priority to recipients of public assistance, other low income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient for receipt of career services and training services. The policy and procedures for the delivery of services and activities can also be found at the Workforce Board's website.

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The Virgin Islands has always given priority to individuals who fit this definition. The electronic case management system defaults to this target group for determining eligibility. In addition, the VIDOL's monitoring team reviews all contracts, ITA's and agreements to ensure priority is given to this target group.

5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

(5) Transfer of funds between adult and dislocated worker programs

The Territory will continue to utilize the transfer of funds between Adult and Dislocated Programs as it has in the past. Historically, the VI Workforce System has served more adult funded individuals than dislocated individuals and funds have been transferred as needed. The Territory has not yet established a policy on the transfer of funds between adult and dislocated worker programs.

C. WITH RESPECT TO YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AUTHORIZED IN
SECTION 129 OF WIOA—

1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDING GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA IN AWARDING SUCH GRANTS OR CONTRACTS.[11]

1. Criteria for Awarding grants for youth workforce investment activities

Providers of youth activities are not subject to the Individual Training Accounts policy or the Eligible Providers Certification system. Eligible providers of youth activities will be determined by contracts awarded through a competitive process, based on the recommendation of the Youth Committee of the Workforce Board and on the criteria as described in the Youth Transition Plan. An eligible provider list for youth activities will be developed and disseminated throughout the One-Stop system for providers of youth services approved through the competitive bidding process.

Proposals will be required to make assurances that the following are in place:

- Adequate technical and financial resources;
- A well defined program design that relates to the needs of the local economy;
- The ability to meet program design specifications at a reasonable cost;
- A satisfactory record of past performance; and
- A satisfactory record of fiscal accountability, organization and operational controls.

The *disqualifying factors* for bidders under the competitive process include:

- Providers with a history of poor past performance;
- Providers that fail to establish linkages to local market demands;
- Providers that fail to demonstrate adequate goals and structure in youth program design.

Evaluation factors are based on a hundred point scale and include:

Labor Market Status – The strength of the occupational area in terms of employment opportunities available, entry-level wages, upward mobility and stability of the industry – is occupational area demand driven? (15 points)

Program Design – The relevancy of the program design to the promised outcomes; type and mix of services as compared with the population to be served (30 points)

Reasonableness of cost – Reasonableness of the single unit charge in relation to the program goals and outcomes. (25 points)

Organization Capability – The organization's overall capability including experience with serving at-risk youth; administrative capacity, available resources, and demonstrated effectiveness in past training (10 points)

Facilities, staffing, equipment – Accessibility of the training site to participants, the availability of appropriate equipment and the adequacy of the facility and the experience of staff. (10 points)

Youth Services – Ability of program to provide services to youth. Does provider regularly work with youth or is program a subset of Adult training? (10 points)

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AS DESCRIBED IN 129(A)(1)(B), INCLUDING HOW IT WILL LEVERAGE AND ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

1. Describe the strategies the State will use to achieve improved outcomes for out-of-school Youth

The Youth team at the Job Center has developed an interactive program that is being rolled out throughout the Territory directed at addressing the needs of out-of-school youth. The *Work, Learn and Earn* program is a twelve (12) week paid work experience for out-of-school youth aged 18-24 in which youth customers work for twenty (20) hours a week. During this time they will engage in work ready foundational skills development and career planning related workshops offered by the WIOA Youth team. At the program's outcome each youth customer will:

- - Learn the soft skills needed for Job Success;
 - Be able to and complete at least one networking experience with local employers in the community;
 - Complete a resume and cover letter;
 - Be able to perform a self service search through the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) to access current job openings;
 - Participate in a work experience in a career sector of interest;
 - Know how to use labor market information to determine career interest

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT ALL 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2) ARE MADE AVAILABLE AND EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS UNDER THE WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM ELEMENT. [12]

1. Describe how the State will ensure that all 14 program elements described in WIOA are made available and effectively implemented.

The system will utilize a multi-dimensional strategic approach to provide youth with workforce investment activities and services which align with the fourteen (14) program elements. Youth programs and activity will focus on ensuring that the WIOA provisions focusing 75 percent of program funds on out-of-school youth is met and achieved. Similarly, paid work experiences, pre-apprenticeships and on-the job training programs will highlight the approach taken by the system to achieve this desired outcome. Specific emphasis will be placed on services to low-income, basic skills deficient or an English language learner; homeless; connections with the juvenile system or adult justice system; pregnant or parenting, person with a disability; low income in need of assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.

The Youth team provides in-house academic and career assessments for WIOA Youth to determine the services and activities needed for each young person. Individual Employment

Plans or Service Strategies are developed and referrals made to the service providers linked to the program elements. The Youth team maintains a listing of Youth providers that specialize in the provision of one or more Youth element. An RFP is released each year requesting proposals from providers in the areas most in need. Due to the size of the Territory, many providers have been with the Workforce System for many years and have adapted programming to accommodate and/or expand the offerings based on the changes in WIOA.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII). IF THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY, DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

1. Provide the language contained in the State policy for “requiring additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment” criterion for out-of-school youth and for in-school youth.

The Virgin Islands definition for “requires additional assistance” developed by the Workforce Board for both in-school and out of school youth provides additional eligibility factors that enables the provision of services to at-risk youth.

In-school Youth, and

- Has exhibited poor attendance in an educational program during the last 12 calendar months; or
- Has been suspended from school during the last 12 calendar months; or
- Has been placed on academic probation during the current school year Out of School Youth, and
- Has dropped out of a post-secondary educational program during the past 12 calendar months; or
- Has limited work history or no work history; or
- Has repeatedly been terminated from employment during the past 12 calendar months

5. INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION, AS DEFINED IN LAW, FOR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL AND ATTENDING SCHOOL AS SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(I) AND SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(I). IF STATE LAW DOES NOT DEFINE “NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL” OR “ATTENDING SCHOOL,” INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE AND PROVIDE THE STATE POLICY FOR DETERMINING WHETHER A YOUTH IS ATTENDING OR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL.

1. Include the State definition, as defined in law, for not attending school and attending school as specified in WIOA section 129(a) (1) (B) (i) and 129 (a) (1) (C) (i)

In accordance with the Virgin Islands Code the Territory’s policy for attending and not attending school is:

17 V.I.C. § 82. Compulsory school attendance; age of pupils; exceptions

1. *All children shall commence their school education by attending an approved kindergarten from the beginning of the school year in the calendar year in which they reach their fifth*

birthday, and they shall continue to attend school regularly until the expiration of the school year nearest their eighteenth birthday, except as provided in section 287 of this title; provided, however, those who graduate from high school before the age of 18 are excepted and students attending the National Guard Youth Challenge

Program or any other program approved by the Virgin Islands Board of Education which has the equivalency of a high school diploma are also excepted.

1. *The Commissioner of Education, in conjunction with the Virgin Islands Board of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations to carry out this section no later than 12 months after the enactment of this section*

1. If not using basic skills deficient definition contained in WIOA section 3 (5) (B), include the State definition.

The Virgin Islands recognizes the definition as described in WIOA section 3 (5) (B) and adopts as follows:

The term “basic skills deficient” means, with respect to an individual-

1.
 - a. who is a youth, that the individual has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or
 - b. who is a youth or adult, that the individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

6. IF USING THE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION WHICH MUST FURTHER DEFINE HOW TO DETERMINE IF AN INDIVIDUAL IS UNABLE TO COMPUTE OR SOLVE PROBLEMS, OR READ, WRITE, OR SPEAK ENGLISH, AT A LEVEL NECESSARY TO FUNCTION ON THE JOB, IN THE INDIVIDUAL'S FAMILY, OR IN SOCIETY. IF NOT USING THE PORTION OF THE DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE.

1. If not using basic skills deficient definition contained in WIOA section 3 (5) (B), include the State definition.

The Virgin Islands recognizes the definition as described in WIOA section 3 (5) (B) and adopts as follows:

The term “basic skills deficient” means, with respect to an individual-

1.
 - a. who is a youth, that the individual has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or
 - b. who is a youth or adult, that the individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)

2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)

3. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

1. **SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS**(1) The Virgin Islands Department of Labor is the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds as determined by the Governor of the Territory.(2) Youth activity is available for both in-school and out-of-school youth who are eligible as per the requirements of WIOA 129 (a) (1) (B) and 129 (a) (1) (C) (iv). Programs are solicited through a competitive bidding process and are based on the fourteen program elements. A list of WIOA youth providers can be found at the VI Department of Labor's website (www.vidol.gov). (3) The roles and resources contributed by One-Stop partners are outlined in the AJC Memorandum of Understanding, which at a minimum includes the basic services of each program. American Job Centers (AJC) are designed to provide a wide array of workforce development services to all customers of the system to include job seekers, career workers, employers, and businesses. The Virgin Islands Department of Labor is the One Stop Operator in the Territory of the US Virgin Islands. They are responsible for the management and operations of the One Stop Centers in both districts. In accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) One-Stop Centers and their partners are tasked with:• Providing job seekers with the skills and credentials necessary to secure and advance in employment with family-sustaining wages;• Providing access and opportunity to all job seekers, including individuals with barriers to employment, such as individuals with disabilities, to prepare for, obtain, retain and advance in high-quality jobs and high-demand careers;• Enabling business and employers to easily identify and hire skilled workers and access other supports, including education and training for their current workforce;• Participating in rigorous evaluations that support continuous improvement of one-stop centers by identifying which strategies work better for different populations;• Ensuring that high-quality integrated data inform decisions made by policy makers, employers and job seekers.

a.

4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLES AND RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

(1) WIOA Title I services are administered through the VI Department of Labor (VIDOL). VIDOL currently serves as the One-Stop Operator and manages the programs and services offered through the AJC until a contract with a new vendor is finalized. As a government entity, VIDOL follows the requirements as outlined in 2 CFR 200.317 "When procuring property and service under a Federal award, a state must follow the same policies and procedures it uses for procurements from its non-Federal funds." All procurement, which includes the competitive process to award sub-grants and contracts for the Virgin Islands government is administered by the VI Department of Property and Procurement. Their processes may be accessed from their website at: <https://dpp.vi.gov/forms-documents> in documents entitled: Procurement Process Overview & Guide and Procurement Rules & Regulations.

5. THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS USED TO AWARD THE SUBGRANTS AND CONTRACTS FOR TITLE I ACTIVITIES.

(1) The One-Stop system is the basic delivery system for adult and dislocated worker services. Through the One-Stop system adults and dislocated workers in need of training will be provided an Individual Training Account and access to lists of eligible providers of training. Participants may purchase training services from eligible service providers they select in consultation with their case managers.

6. HOW TRAINING SERVICES OUTLINED IN SECTION 134 WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS AND/OR THROUGH CONTRACTS, AND HOW SUCH TRAINING APPROACHES WILL BE COORDINATED. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MEET INFORMED CUSTOMER CHOICE REQUIREMENTS REGARDLESS OF TRAINING APPROACH.

Customer Choice: Individual Training Accounts allow customers to choose the provider of training service based on the specific information (prerequisites, costs, location, duration, certification received) listed by the provider.

- The *amount* of the Individual Training voucher shall not exceed **\$3,800.00**, except in the instance of an approved specialized or technical program.
- The *duration* of an Individual Training voucher shall not exceed twelve (12) months, except in the instance of an approved specialized or technical program

7. HOW THE STATE BOARD, IN FULFILLING LOCAL BOARD FUNCTIONS, WILL COORDINATE TITLE I ACTIVITIES WITH THOSE ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE II. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL CARRY OUT THE REVIEW OF LOCAL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED UNDER TITLE II CONSISTENT WITH WIOA SECS. 107(D)(11)(A) AND (B)(I) AND WIOA SEC. 232.

- General Procedure for Funding Eligible Providers

The Virgin Islands, will provide successful agencies with a 25% starting of their respective funding awards during the initial quarter of service and continue with quarterly draws in increments of 25% upon receipts of expenditures and verifications of services rendered.

- Applications

The VI Department of Education will run an open and competitive grant process for funding with the adult education services. Eighty-two-point five percent (82.5%) of the federal allocation for grants will go to local entities providing adult education services. Eligible Applicants Eligible applicants for these funds include (1) local educational agencies; (2) community-based organizations of demonstrated effectiveness; (3) volunteer literacy organizations of demonstrated effectiveness; (4) institutions of higher education; (5) public or private nonprofit agencies; (6) libraries; (7) public housing authorities; (8) nonprofit institutions that are not described in any of these descriptions and have the ability to provide literacy services to adults and families; and a consortium of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described in items (1) through (8). Community-based organizations and nonprofit institutions include nonprofit faith-based organizations. Public Notice of Availability and A Public Notice of Process will be distributed and advertised in the local media and related agencies. Eligible providers will also be verified against SAM.gov listing.

- Request for Proposal Readers (Grant Reviewers)

A Public Notice to solicit the services for Grant Reviewers will be published in local media. Objective and Qualifications, Compensation, Scope of Work will be listed in advertisements.

The VI Department of Education, under the provisions of the Adult Education Family and Literacy Act, will consider eligible providers seeking grant funding within the guidelines set forth in the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act.

Applicants will include a descriptive narrative of the use of funds, which will be consistent with Title II of AEFLA. Particular attention will be given to details of program and service alignment and how they will achieve measurable outcomes. Successful Agency providers must agree to attain State set levels for the performance of primary core indicators set by Federal and State Plans. Provider activities will be carried out through the One-Stop Delivery System with recommendations from the Workforce Investment Board.

Eligible providers will be assessed on past demonstrated effectiveness to deliver services and effect significant educational student gains. Applicable local laws governing commerce, licensing of sub-grantees, and reporting will be in effect throughout the duration of the multiyear grant.

A request for Proposal (RFP), including an application packet, will be prepared and a public notice will be given to the general public to further assure equity among applicants and interested parties. All submitted entries post marked or submitted in person and time stamped within the appointed date, will be reviewed and sent to the Virgin Islands Workforce Board for additional review. The RFP process will be subject to the Procedures outlined for the Virgin Islands Department of Procurement as well as the Virgin Islands Department of Education.

All interested responsive parties will receive an application packet with instructions for preparation of the application and procedures for submittal to the designated Division of Purchases. The deadline will be advertised to all as prescribed. All grants are date stamped at the Division of Purchases and logged in by the Purchases Staff. The grants are then picked up by a VIDE designated staff member and teams or readers are assembled to read and rate the proposals based on a common evaluation tool which assigns numerical values to essential elements of the proposal. Grants reading teams are made up of representatives from the Virgin Islands Department of Education, educational consultants, and other stakeholders.

- Evaluation of Application

Teams use an evaluation tool with specific criteria to determine whether the proposed applications will meet Virgin Islands Department of Education with specific criteria to determine whether the proposed application will meet Virgin Islands Department of Education quality program standards as well as the USDOE requirements set forth in Section 231 of Title II of the Workforce Investment Opportunities Act. All proposals must also submit a reasonable budget with at least a 10% local match. Applications will be read and rated a minimum of three times by trained grant readers. No grant will be funded unless it has met a minimum score of 70 points.

The Virgin Islands State Office for Adult Education will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers by reinstituting its policy for the selection of prospective applicants as defined in WIOA guidelines. Additional guidance as outlined in (VI.b.)

All proposals must be returned to the VI State Office for Adult Education with WIB recommendations for final review and selection of providers.

The Eligible providers will be selected through a review process of the State Office for Career, Technical and Adult Education and the Virgin Islands Workforce Board. Assurances must be given by the successful applicant that receives the grant funding that they will conduct classes that provide adult education and literacy activities including programs that provide such activities concurrently. Reference [Section 463.20(b)]

Additionally, successful applicants will be apprised of the Target Performance categories and data as well as NRS Tables which outline areas of concentration.

Efforts will be made to strengthen information gathering of student goals for education and employment and Exit Data and follow up to facilitate the ultimate goal of client employment.

The same announcement, application and process will be used for all applicants for each RFP that is issued.

8. COPIES OF EXECUTED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WHICH DEFINE HOW ALL LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATION OF AND ACCESS TO THE ENTIRE SET OF SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES ADMINISTERING REHABILITATION ACT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

1. Vocational Rehabilitation Program

In the case of a State that, under Section 101 (a) (2) (A) (i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

The Virgin Islands has one designated State Agency that is responsible for serving all individuals with disabilities within the state. Funds are not distributed to two different agencies. Many states across the US have separate agencies for persons who are blind and in some instances individuals who are deaf. The Virgin Islands has a “Combined” agency and serve all disability types. Vocational Rehabilitation has sufficient funds to serve all eligible individuals who apply for services at this time.

E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

A request will be sent for several waivers.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program’s Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	Yes
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)		15.0%		25.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)		15.0%		25.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)		\$5,500		\$5,600
Credential Attainment Rate		45.0%		46.0%
Measurable Skill Gains		Baseline		Baseline
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)		37.0%		45.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)		15.0%		35.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)		5,500		5,600

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Credential Attainment Rate		43.0%		50.0%
Measurable Skill Gains		Baseline		Baseline
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)		26.0%		45.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)		22.0%		36.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)		Baseline		Baseline
Credential Attainment Rate		35.0%		55.0%
Measurable Skill Gains		Baseline		Baseline
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM (EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)

A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL STAFF THE PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES UNDER THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, SUCH AS THROUGH STATE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO STATE MERIT STAFF EMPLOYEES, STAFF OF A SUBRECIPIENT, OR SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.

Employment Service Professional Staff Development

1. Professional development activities for Employment Service staff are an on- going process. New staff undergoes orientation that describes the workforce system and employment services role in it. They learn how to use job search and matching techniques based upon demand occupation and local labor market information. Work readiness products and resources used to conduct workshops and seminars is shared with staff so that they can better assist their customers with choosing services and

strategies that benefit them in a job search. Additionally, online training, webinars and direct training from industry experts is utilized to enforce trends, products or tools with demonstrated performance or new to the workforce system. The Territory's implementation of WIOA is the goal of having at least one third of the staff acquire industry credentials in workforce development during each program year until all staff are credentialed. This plan will continue during program year 2021. All core program staff will be invited to participate in these professional training endeavors.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

Program leads periodically conduct an assessment of staff's knowledge and skill levels of UI and W-P programs. Quarterly sessions that update the respective staff of the others product, including any changes or upgrades are conducted. Both Unemployment Insurance and Wagner Peyser staff are co- located at the Workforce Center thus facilitating the interactivity between them. Front line staffs are trained to know eligibility requirements and basic information of both programs.

All UI claimants register for services with Wagner-Peyser at the time of entry to the Workforce System. Since UI staff is housed at the Job Center in both island districts, all customer eligibility determination is done by UI staff therefore any need for adjudication is done either at the time of application or by appointment at a later date.

3. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION

Employment Service Professional Staff Development

1) Professional development activities for Employment Service staff are an on- going process. New staff undergoes orientation that describes the workforce system and employment services role in it. They learn how to use job search and matching techniques based upon demand occupation and local labor market information. Work readiness products and resources used to conduct workshops and seminars is shared with staff so that they can better assist their customers with choosing services and strategies that benefit them in a job search. Additionally, online training, webinars and direct training from industry experts is utilized to enforce trends, products or tools with demonstrated performance or new to the workforce system. New for the Territory's implementation of WIOA is the goal to have at least one third of the staff acquire industry credentials in workforce development during each program year until all staff are credentialed. This plan will be launched during program year 2016. All core program staff will be invited to participate in this professional training endeavor.

1) Program leads periodically conduct an assessment of staff's knowledge and skill levels of UI and W-P programs. Quarterly sessions that update the respective staff of the others product, including any changes or upgrades are conducted. Both Unemployment Insurance and Wagner Peyser staff are co- located at the Workforce Center thus facilitating the interactivity between them. Front line staffs are trained to know eligibility requirements and basic information of both programs.

All UI claimants register for services with Wagner-Peyser at the time of entry to the Workforce System. Since UI staff is housed at the Job Center in both island districts, all customer eligibility determination is done by UI staff therefore any need for adjudication is done either at the time of application or by appointment at a later date.

B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE

Wagner-Peyser funds are used to support UI claimants and the communication process between UI and W-P through the provision of access to labor market information on Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS).

UI claimants attend an orientation session that provides an overview of Wagner- Peyser, WIOA and other services available at the Job Center. Claimants are encouraged to begin the job search process right away and utilize the resources funded through W-P (job club, short-term prevocational training, career exploration tools, etc.) to enhance their job preparation and search.

1. The flow of services at the Territory's Workforce Centers have all customers registering with W-P to search for jobs prior to filing a UI claim; therefore all customers have knowledge of and access to jobs available in local demand occupations as well as other jobs that are listed with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor that they may have interest in pursuing.
2. Customers are determined "able and available" to work as established by the requirement to register with W-P before they file a UI claim. W-P staff initiates the UI claim process and claimants are later called back by a UI staff person for further processing of their claim.

An initial assessment which is comprised of a review of job skills and qualifications, work experience and employment availability in requested occupational field is conducted to determine job readiness and availability.

1. The Eligible Training Provider list is available at all Workforce Center locations and on the VI Department of Labor's website. Customers who are interested in attending training either as a refresher or to acquire new skills work with workforce career counselors to develop a training plan and schedule training and other services that may be needed to attain employment.

Customers seeking UI benefits register under Wagner-Peyser at the time of entry into the Workforce System. Job search activities begin immediately and are done concurrently with application for UI benefits. Wagner-Peyser staff tries to match customers with available jobs based on their work history and qualifications. If it is determined that additional training will be required for employment sought, customers are referred to a Workforce career representative who works with the individual on developing an Individual Employment Plan or Service Strategy.

Training may be selected by the customer and referrals are made by the career representative once prerequisites are met.

1. Agricultural Outreach Plan

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

Reemployment assistance is provided to UI claimants who have been profiled by UI staff. Claimants are referred to W-P staff for services which begin with an orientation to workforce services. Additional services include access to labor market information, career assessments

and structured workshops such as job search techniques and resume building. Other unemployed individuals also have access to these and other services available at the Workforce Centers to include basic career services.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

Wagner-Peyser funds are used to support UI claimants and the communication process between UI and W-P through the provision of access to labor market information on Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS).

UI claimants attend an orientation session that provides an overview of Wagner- Peyser, WIOA and other services available at the Job Center. Claimants are encouraged to begin the job search process right away and utilize the resources funded through W-P (job club, short-term prevocational training, career exploration tools, etc.) to enhance their job preparation and search.

1. The flow of services at the Territory's Workforce Centers have all customers registering with W-P to search for jobs prior to filing a UI claim; therefore all customers have knowledge of and access to jobs available in local demand occupations as well as other jobs that are listed with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor that they may have interest in pursuing.
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An initial assessment which is comprised of a review of job skills and qualifications, work experience and employment availability in requested occupational field is conducted to determine job readiness and availability.

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An initial assessment which is comprised of a review of job skills and qualifications, work experience and employment availability in requested occupational field is conducted to determine job readiness and availability.

1. The Eligible Training Provider list is available at all Workforce Center locations and on the VI Department of Labor’s website. Customers who are interested in attending training either as a refresher or to acquire new skills work with workforce career counselors to develop a training plan and schedule training and other services that may be needed to attain employment.
1. The Eligible Training Provider list is available at all Workforce Center locations and on the VI Department of Labor’s website. Customers who are interested in attending training either as a refresher or to acquire new skills work with workforce career counselors to develop a training plan and schedule training and other services that may be needed to attain employment.

E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED. AN ASSESSMENT NEED DESCRIBES THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

2. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS’ NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWs IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW

ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA
SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE
ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A. COLLABORATION

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

C. DATA ASSESSMENT

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes
4. SWA officials: 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.	Yes

WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)		12.0%		15.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)		15.0%		16.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)		Baseline		Baseline
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

The Virgin Islands Department of Education Division of Adult Education will align adult education content standards with the territory adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS), through the adoption and implementation of the College and Career Ready (CCR) Standards for Adult Education that were dispersed through USDOE. The CCR standards are the result of a

practice that examined the CCSS from the viewpoint of adult education. The CCR standards reflect a broad agreement among subject matter experts in adult education about what is required for adult students to know to be prepared for the rigors of post-secondary education and training. Qualified providers will be required to include these standards to maximize the effectiveness of curricula and instruction, and to prepare students for transition to post-secondary education and/or the workforce. In order to ensure that all instructors are knowledgeable of CCR Standards, and that they understand how to use them effectively to guide classroom instruction, the State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education will provide professional development to all instructional staff in presently funded programs, and to any prospective adult education grantees. At the adult secondary level, adult high school credit programs implement the same course descriptions and standards as those used in the K-12 educational system. GED® preparation courses are also a component of the Virgin Islands adult secondary level programming and are also aligned to the Common Core Standards. A high school equivalency diploma is issued in the Virgin Islands to candidates who successfully demonstrate competency in language arts (reading and writing), mathematics, science, and social studies. The assessment used for the diploma program is the 2014 GED® Test.

B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education is responsible for administering funds to suitable providers, and providing program performance oversight to sub-grantees. Funds will be provided to eligible local entities for the provision of adult education services which include: Adult Education; Literacy; Workplace adult education and literacy activities and Workforce preparation activities.

ADULT GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND COURSES

Adult Basic Education (language arts, mathematics, and reading) Program - The courses included in this program are designed for the student to obtain a level of educational instruction intended to improve the employability of the state's workforce through instruction in mathematics, reading, language, and workforce preparation skills at grade level equivalency of 0-8.9. These courses are based on the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. **Adult High School Program** - This program is designed for students to receive high school credit in one or more courses leading to a standard high school diploma. Students obtain credits upon completion of courses and passing state mandated assessments necessary to qualify for a high school diploma. **GED® Preparation Program** - This program prepares adults to successfully complete the four subject area tests leading to qualification for a United States Virgin Islands High School Diploma. There are four courses Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science and Social Studies. These courses have been aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards. The U.S. Virgin Islands has approved the GED® as the only high school equivalency test. **Adult ESL Course**- The adult ESL course is designed to improve skills of adults who desire to enter the state's workforce through acquisition of communication skills and cultural competencies which enhance the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in English.

Citizenship studies will be integrated into the Social Studies curriculum. General topics will include elements of U.S. History, Government, culture and symbols, with specific emphasis on rights and responsibilities under the Constitution of the United States of America.

Funding Opportunities

The Virgin Islands Department of Education will accept applications for all eligible applicants to fund Adult Education and Family Literacy services in the St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix Districts in accordance with applicable Public Law Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) for an established period designated by the VIDE State Office of Career, Technical &

Adult Education. Non-profit entities will be required to have proof of tax exempt organization status under 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Purpose

The purpose of the sub grant award is to provide Adult Education and Literacy programs in the US Virgin Islands that will assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; assist adults who are parents to obtain the skills necessary to be partners in the education of their children; assist adults in the completion of a secondary school education. Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act provides funding for Adult Basic Education and Literacy services programs that will help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving educational opportunities of low income families.

Each eligible provider receiving a sub grant from the Virgin Islands Department of Education shall use the funding to operate one or more programs in the St. Thomas/St. John District, St. Croix District or both that provide services or instruction in one or more of the following categories; Adult Education and Literacy services including workplace literacy services; family literacy services; and or English Literacy programs; for individuals interested in improving their education and employment skills. AEFLA, Section 231 (b). Awards will be subject to availability of funding from the US Department of Education. The funding period will be assigned for the period of (2) two years.

Eligible Participants

An eligible provider must demonstrate past effectiveness by providing performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the State's application for funds. An eligible provider must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to post-secondary education and training.

The Virgin Islands State Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education will determine if an applicant is an organization of demonstrated effectiveness in one of the two ways in which an eligible provider may meet the requirements:

- (1) An eligible provider that has been funded under Title II of the Act that as provided performance data required under section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness. Or
- (2) An eligible provider that has not been previously funded under Title II of the Act and has provided performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of its success in achieving outcomes listed above.

An organization of demonstrated effectiveness may include local educational agencies; community based organizations; volunteer literacy organization of demonstrated effectiveness; institutions of higher education; public or private non-profit agencies; libraries; public housing authorities; non-profit institutions that are not described in any of these descriptions and have the ability to provide literacy services to adults and families; and a consortium of the agencies; organizations and non-profit institutions to include non-profit faith based organizations as well as profit entities will be eligible. Successful provider receiving sub grants under AEFLA are required to obtain the corresponding MIS System being used by the VIDE State Office for Career, Technical & Adult Education. Annual MIS System professional development will be provided to eligible providers.

Number of Sub Grants - The number of sub grants funded will depend on the number of applicants, number of centers and funds available. Statutory Considerations Literacy Act, AEFLA Section 231 (e) In awarding sub grants under this section, the Virgin Islands Department of

Education shall consider the following factors: 1. Based on recent previous, reliable evidence of past performance, eligible provider shall demonstrate the ability to align with negotiated and established measurable performance goals for participant outcomes. 2. The past effectiveness of an eligible provider in assisting adults, especially those with the lowest levels of competencies, to meet and or exceed in learning commonly established level literacy skills for within a 1 year period beginning with the adoption of an eligible agency's performance measures 3. The commitment of the eligible provider to serve individuals in the community who are most in need of literacy services, including individuals who are low income or have minimal literacy skills; Literacy Act, AEFLA Section 231 (e) Adult Education - State Administration Purpose- To implement all facets of the Virgin Islands Adult Education State Plan based on the extension of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. Inclusive of the State responsibilities of the State Office is to ensure that performance levels of adult education programs are competitive grants for community agencies, monitoring and providing of technical assistance to designated personnel. The State Office responsibilities encompass overseeing all aspects of Adult Education programs such as workplace literacy, family literacy, and English literacy programs. Additionally, the State would be responsible for the evaluation and review of outcomes achieved by each local program based on the prescribed Adult Education Monitoring tool for evaluation and WIOA Performance measurements. Assessments of progress made in achieving State goals for Adult Education will be handled by reporting of findings at the National level. Special Rule: The Virgin Islands State Office of Career, Technical, & Adult Education will not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that the agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities.

If family literacy activities are provided, the eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with other agencies that provide program and services that are not included in Title II funds. This should occur prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

Workforce preparation activities means activities, programs, or services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of post-secondary education or training, or employment.

Each eligible provider desiring a grant or contract from VIDE shall submit an application to VIDE containing such information and assurances as VIDE may require, including: A. A description of how funds awarded under Title II will be spent consistent with the requirements of the title; B. A description of any cooperative arrangements the eligible provider has with other agencies, institutions, or organizations for the delivery of adult education and literacy activities; C. A description of how the eligible provider will provide services in alignment with the State Plan, including how such provider will promote concurrent enrollment in programs and activities under Title II, as appropriate; D. A description of how the eligible provider will meet the State adjusted levels of performance described in 116(b)(3), including how such provider will collect data on such performance indicators; E. A description of how the eligible provider will fulfill one stop partner responsibilities as described in section 121(b)(1)(A), as appropriate; F. A description of how the eligible provider will provide services in a manner that meets the needs of eligible individuals; and G. Any information that addresses the 13 considerations described.

Local Plan Alignment

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education will establish, within the competition, a time-frame that provides for the submission of all applications for funds under AEFLA to the Virgin Islands Local Workforce Development Board.

Within the appropriate time-frame, the submission of the applications to the Local Board for its review for consistency with the local plan and an opportunity for the local board to make recommendations to the State Office to promote alignment with the local plan will be conducted. The State Office will consider the results of the review by the Local Board in determining the extent to which the application addresses the required considerations in § 463.20.

Local Administrative Costs

An eligible provider receiving a grant or contract under this part may consider costs incurred in connection with the following activities to be administrative costs:

(a) Planning; (b) Administration, including carrying out performance accountability requirements; (c) Professional development; (d) Providing adult education and literacy services in alignment with local workforce plans, including promoting co-enrollment in programs and activities under Title I, as appropriate; and (e) Carrying out the one-stop partner responsibilities described in § 678.420, including contributing to the infrastructure costs of the one-stop delivery system.

C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

Eligible providers awarded federal funds through this application process will be required to use the funds for the establishment or operation of one or more programs in the St. Thomas/St. John District, St. Croix District or both that provide services or instruction in one or more of the following categories: Adult Education and Literacy services; and English literacy programs and to negotiate awards with potential recipients.

The funds will be competed and awarded in accordance with the common elements and distribution of funds section.

Using funds made available under Section 222(a)(1), priorities will be focused on increasing the number of incarcerated adults completing a secondary school credential, entering post-secondary education and training. Adult Basic Skills programs will be offered through the Virgin Islands Bureau of Corrections and include classes in Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School Equivalency preparation, and English as a Second Language. 1. Adult Basic Education courses will be provided to students who score below the 9th grade level on a standardized assessment. Reading comprehension, writing, and math skills are emphasized in these classes. 2. High School Equivalency preparation courses will be provided to students who have not attained a high school diploma or the equivalent and score at least at the 9th grade level, but less than the 12th grade level on a standardized assessment. 3. English as a Second Language courses will provide instruction in speaking, listening comprehension, reading and writing skills for offenders whose primary language is a language other than English. 4. Participating offenders will be assessed through pre- and post testing assessments and placed according to scoring level and general ability.

Adult Education State Staff will continue to engage with Adult Education Administration Staff of the Bureau of Corrections with the goal of continuous improvement of the Adult Education program and improve how elimination of barriers to successful re-entry. Funding allocations will be determined as part of the planning process for implementation of WIOA. Adult education programs offered in correctional institutions include ABE, GED® Preparation, and ESL.

A correctional institution includes any prison; jail; reformatory; detention center; or halfway house, community-based rehabilitation center, or any other similar institution designed for the confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders. A criminal offender is any individual who is charged with or convicted of any criminal offense.

D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

(Does not apply to the Virgin Islands)

E. STATE LEADERSHIP

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education will use funds made available under section 222(a)(2) for the following adult education and literacy activities to develop or enhance the adult education system of the State. Not more than 12.5 percent of the grant funds made available will be used to carry out State leadership activities under section 223. The mandatory leadership activities are:

1. Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with core programs and one-stop partners, including eligible providers, including the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities.

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education will continue to work collaboratively with other core programs and partner agencies to provide comprehensive and wraparound services to program participants. State-level policy and planning bodies provide an opportunity for Adult Education to work with Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) and other key agencies defined in the law. Adult Education will provide resources and services through One-Stop Centers (including intake/orientation for Adult Education services, and transition resources), referral processes, and other joint mechanisms developed through agency partnerships.

2. The establishment or operation of high quality professional development programs (section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA)

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education (SOCTAE) will provide targeted professional development based upon a statewide needs assessment, research regarding best practices, and federal recommendations. SOCTAE will survey local providers to ascertain areas in which there may be a gap in knowledge or a need for improvement. From these results, SOCTAE will coordinate and execute broad-based training through a variety of modalities to assist program leaders and teachers in areas such as program improvement, instructional techniques, integrated education and training, CCR standards, transition to post-secondary education and employment, and the infusion of technology into instruction. Professional Development may include: • An annual operations meeting, wherein local program administrators are given an overview of changes in policy and related practices, budget management, and reporting requirements; • An annual statewide professional development conference for a variety of adult education personnel; and Webinars/Teleconferences.

3. Technical Assistance

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education will deliver technical assistance to eligible providers to enhance program effectiveness, increase the ability of providers to meet established performance standards, and fulfill obligations associated with being a One-Stop partner. SOCTAE will provide professional development/technical assistance via phone, webinar, teleconference, on-site training, and seminars. Targeted technical assistance will focus on areas of national interest such as recruitment and intake, student engagement, data

management and reporting, testing procedures, and transition to post-secondary education and employment. To ensure that local providers are adequately equipped to foster continuous improvement and maintain an ability to meet the needs of the Virgin Islands workforce, SOCTAE will: • Deliver technical assistance to increase the ability of instructors to provide impactful instruction and obtain desired results in key areas. • Provide State and local level information regarding the role of adult education as a key component in the delivery of one-stop center services. • Provide training related to the use of technology to improve classroom effectiveness and program outcomes. 4. The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the State.

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education will engage in island-wide program monitoring procedures to maintain sufficient knowledge and oversight of local adult education providers. Oversight will include continuous data monitoring, in addition to site visits and on-site reviews. Specific attention will be given to programs with low performance. OAE will develop targeted technical assistance to meet the specific needs of the program in need of improvement.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE

The State Office for Adult Education will continue to assist with the development of curricula in order to incorporate the essential components of reading that relate to adult activities such as family literacy and civic education. In conjunction with Partner programs and recommendations from the Workforce Development Board, we will continue to develop a more complete model of careers pathways programs for each level. Memorandums of Agreements will continue to be implemented under existing and new Partnership agreements to continue the facilitation of the completion of Adult Basic and Adult Secondary level courses to Post Secondary programs.

F. ASSESSING QUALITY

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education uses various means of assessment in its annual and ongoing evaluation process, including site monitoring visits, desk monitoring, program improvement processes, and performance and financial audits. Bi-monthly monitoring will be performed and additional random verification audits will be performed for verification purposes. Instructional Observations are performed twice per year. Additional observations may be performed for verification purposes. The results of these processes determine program improvement actions.

The State Office will implement a Quality Assurance System that will assure student performance improvement, financial accountability, program quality, and regulatory compliance of local providers in accordance with federal laws and regulations, state statutes and rules, and the provisions of an approved grant award. The monitoring component of the Quality Assurance System is risk-based. Risk assessment is a process used to evaluate variables associated with workforce education grants and assign a rating for the level of risk to the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) and SOCTAE associated with each provider. In order to complete a risk assessment, certain risk factors have been identified which may affect the level of risk for each agency. A risk matrix is completed for each provider. The annual risk assessment is conducted by the quality assurance team to determine the monitoring strategy appropriate for each provider. A range of monitoring strategies includes conference calls, improvement plans, grant reviews, etc., with the more comprehensive strategy such as an onsite visit, designated for providers deemed to be at higher risk.

Actions taken to improve quality of non-compliance finding(s) are identified, a corrective action plan will be implemented. The corrective action plan must identify the findings and specific strategies the provider will implement to ensure finding(s) have been resolved.

In addition to program improvement plans and other actions taken to improve quality, the following activities are available: New Director Training Provides new directors with information such as federal and state guidelines, data collection and NRS reporting, and resources needed to administer their programs. MIS System training will be afforded to providers on an annual basis and technical support will be available through both the MIS provider and the VIDE State Office for Adult Education.

TABE and Training/Trainers through ongoing training, a network of trained professionals ensures the uniform administration and reporting of assessments used for determining federal level gains.

Data Reporting and Program Improvement Training provides training on the fundamentals of the NRS. Topics include monitoring, data analysis and collection, types of data and measures, assessments, data quality, and related information.

Technical Assistance Adult Education calls to inform adult educators of program changes, reporting announcements, and opportunities to ask questions of the SOCTAE staff.

Teacher Training provides information and resources to support instruction in the areas of GED preparation, college and career readiness, career awareness and planning, career pathways, reading and math instructional strategies.

The State Office of Adult Education has in place a monitoring tool that assess each component of the Adult Education program. Curriculum, Program performance, Enrollment, expected Outcomes, and reporting are all assessed through the Monitoring tool. Professional Development services have been identified both locally and nationally to enhance performance levels in each area. (1) Instruction in the essential components of reading instruction will be guided by National Common Core Standards for Adult Education as well as traditional Common Core Standards. (2) Instruction related to the specific needs of adult learners will be guided by Placement Tests results and Common Core State Standards for Adult Education. Partner Agencies will be consulted especially when Memorandum of Agreements are in place to serve a particular population. (3) Instruction provided by volunteers or paid personnel will be guided by designated Principals, Administrators or Directors of the noted Local Educational Agency and will be part of monitoring and performance assessments. (4) The dissemination of information about models and promising practices will continue through recommended Partnerships and available services both locally and nationally to enhance teaching techniques and quality of instructional material. All persons associated with the program will be included in mass emails with information on promising practices and links for educational improvements.

Program Evaluation (2 pages max) 1. The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.

Guidance for applicants: Submit a strong evaluation plan that will shape the development of the project from the beginning of the grant period. The plan should include the program objectives and performance indicators, clear benchmarks to monitor progress toward specific objectives and outcome measures to assess impact on adult student learning. The plan should identify the individual(s) and or organization(s) that have agreed to serve as the evaluator for the project and describe his/her/its qualifications. The plan should describe the evaluation design, indicating : (1) types of data that will be collected; (2) when various types of data will be collected; (3) what designs and methods will be used; (4) what instruments will be developed and when; (5) how the data will be analyzed; (6) when reports of results and outcomes will become available; and (7) how information will be used by the project to monitor progress and to provide accountability information to stakeholders about success at the project site(s).

The State Office will assess the quality of its professional development programs designed to improve: 1. monitoring of programs; 2. inputting of data for measurable student gains; 3. TABE train the trainer; and 4. GED preparation practices in the following ways: a. Multiple professional development sessions have been conducted for program staff and administrators data quality and input of data for NRS reporting. Clean data input to which they incorporate the strategies discussed during the professional development sessions; 2. pre-post assessments of conference participants on the key concepts and methods addressed during the training sessions; 3. the State's review of the key indicators of effective ABE program operations, such as learner attendance, educational functional level gain, completion of GED® academic tests and GED® attainment, and ABE learners' transition to next steps; and 4. conference participants' evaluation forms.

The State Office along with the Leadership Team will conduct systematic site visits and desktop/onsite monitoring. Through these visits and monitoring activities, the State Office will monitor and evaluate the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the Districts. Each eligible provider will be monitored for compliance and appropriate technical assistance will be provided as needed.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not "eligible individuals" within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

AUTHORIZING OR CERTIFYING REPRESENTATIVE

APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION	Enter information in this column
State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education	
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	Enter information in this column
Nancy	
Callwood	
State Director	
nancy.callwood@vide.vi	

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

The State Office meets GEPA requirements when using State Administration and State Leadership funds when providing access to and participation in professional development workshops for administrators, teachers and staff who are AEFLA recipients working with low scoring or disabled students. Most recently, workshops were provided to these groups in the introduction of GED testing materials. Because so many of our teachers encounter lower level students, the State provide the funds to have workshops for teachers to better understand these groups of students by having an in-person representative who was able to give administrators and teachers access to actual practice test material and lessons, best practices with teaching these groups of students, how they can utilize flashcards, practice tests and more importantly use special accommodations such as audiocassettes, braille, large-print or screen-magnification, calculator, scribe, extended time, stop-the-clock breaks and separate or distraction-reduced rooms.

The idea is that through this strategy, students will learn more and perform better on assessments. We will ensure that no student or teacher will be denied participation based on gender, race, national origin, disability or age.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	28.0	28.0	29.0	29.0

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	28.0	28.0	29.0	29.0
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$5,000	5,000	\$5,000	5,000
Credential Attainment Rate	15.0	15.0	15.0	15.0
Measurable Skill Gains	48.0%	48.0	49.0%	48.0
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

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“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

The Virgin Islands continues to foster partnerships that will improve the overall delivery of services. The US Virgin islands State Rehabilitation Council, VISRC, has been struggling to regain momentum since the twin storms. At this time, there are 10 sitting board members to include the VR Administrator. Many of our members have relocated, resigned and other board members continue to serve with expired terms. The VISRC continues to recruit new members as there are several open positions that the board is actively trying to fill. There are several interested candidates and we are in the process of collecting the credentials and applications for those individuals to submit to the Governor for appointment. The members represent various sectors of the community to include family members, guardians of persons with a disability, business Industry and the Client Assistance Program. The Board is seeking to onboard members from the Office of Special Education and the Workforce Board. Although there were numerous setbacks, the VISRC continues to resume its day-to-day operations. VISRC has since reorganized and have developed an agenda of initiatives, goals and priorities that will positively impact the Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services, VIDDRS. The VISRC and VIDDRS continues to maintain a close working relationship and corresponds regularly through conference calls, emails and meetings. The VISRC is lagging behind in completing the Combined Statewide Need Assessment as they are required to be completed every three years. The plan is begin compiling the data from providers, clients, staff and stakeholders by the end of October 2020.

As a result of the State Rehabilitation Council recommendations and findings from the last Combined Statewide Needs Assessment completed 2016, the VISRC and VIDDRS jointly reviewed the need areas, service gaps and identified the following goals and priorities:

Goal1: Increased Visibility within the Territory-The VIDDRS will develop a marketing and advertisement campaign that promotes the available services. Marketing tactics will include

radio spots, interviews, local announcements, government access and local television ads, social media and other online digital platforms.

The VISRC will collaborate with stakeholders to propose an executive order that will enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities within the Government of the United States Virgin Islands.

Goal 2: Expand Service Delivery-Through the use of technology, the VIDDRS will improve its ability to match consumers with career and training opportunities. Implementation of an electronic case management system will provide an avenue to match employers with program participants who possess the desired skillsets.

VIDDRS will provide a comprehensive delivery of services to all applicants and eligible consumers to ensure that they are able to secure and retain gainful employment in accordance with their career interests and goals. The VIDDRS will recruit certified job coaches to effectively provide supported employment services within the territory through the collaboration with private providers, community partners and stakeholders.

Goal 3: Staff Professional Development-The VIDDRS is committed to hiring highly qualified individuals and providing training to maintain the required certifications. VIDDRS will continue to provide training to staff and core partners on VR services.

The VISRC plans to host various forums and workshops that will enhance staff's knowledge and build capacity. VISRC also provides assistance to staff to ensure that they have access to professional advancement trainings and certifications.

VISRC and VIDDRS conducted several sensitivity training sessions, first responder and hurricane preparedness forums over the past year and is committed to providing these trainings in PY 2021 and beyond. These training were held at different governmental agencies such as the Virgin Islands Transit, Virgin Islands Police Department and the Department of Human Services. The VISRC sponsored the award ceremonies for the VIDDRS summer employment training program in both districts. The students were recognized for their accomplishments; this initiative has proven to be rewarding for all involved as it provides an opportunity for transitioning students to obtain skillsets and secure fulltime employment.

The VISRC continues to collaborate with various community agencies and stakeholders such as Center for Independent Living-CIL, State Independent Living Council-SILC, VI Developmental Disabilities Council-VIDDC, Department of Education, Office of Special Education, Virgin Islands University Center of Excellence for Development Disabilities-VIUCEDD, and the Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands-DRCVI. VISRC is committed and focused on ensuring that VIDDRS meet it's goals to provide efficient and comprehensive services for the upcoming program years. We fully support the Division's goals to improve to service delivery to all eligible applicants to include the supported employment clients.

Expanding services for our target population continues to be challenging and VISRC will continue to work with community stakeholders to address this shortfall. One of the major initiatives is the procurement of an electronic case management system that will maintain compliance with federal reports and expand the program ability to reach more individuals through the use of technology.

Another priority is securing adequate staffing; we hope to ensure that VIDDRS remains staffed with highly qualified counselors and advocate as needed for additional personnel and ongoing training opportunities. In the year ahead, the VISRC plans to conduct customer and staff satisfaction surveys to better understand the needs and the challenges of the Division.

Overall, the VISRC in conjunction with the councils, community partners and the Workforce Board will assist the VIDDRS in identifying the service gaps and will work to develop a strategic plan that will ultimately improve successful outcomes moving forward.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

The input from the VISRC was well received; VIDDRS agrees with comments, recommendations and suggestions of the VISRC. VIDDRS appreciates the much needed support from the VISRC and will continue to encourage an open rapport to ensure that service goals are met.

3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

Not Applicable.

B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

The Virgin Islands Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services is not requesting a waiver of statewideness.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

N/A

3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN WILL APPLY TO THE SERVICES APPROVED UNDER THE WAIVER.

N/A

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

The Virgin Islands Vocational Rehabilitation program continues to collaborate with entities not in the State Workforce System. The Designated State Agency plan to engage in an agreement with Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD) to increase college readiness for persons with disabilities residing in the U. S. Virgin Islands. The program will provide 24 transitioning students (12 in St. Thomas/St. John District and 12 in St. Croix District) with access to on-campus resources, disability-related services, and degree program advisement. The program will take place on the university's campus throughout the summer for a period of two weeks. College placement assessments, orientation, training, and counseling will introduce the academic expectations of post-secondary education to interested consumers. One of the main objectives of the program is to sensitize the faculty and staff of the University to the needs of persons with disabilities in and out of the classroom. This program will serve as a catalyst for students with disabilities to improve student success rates and facilitate an opportunity to foster relationships with peers with similar backgrounds and career goals. The Virgin Islands Disabilities and Vocational Rehabilitation collaborates with the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Association for Independent Living Center on initiatives and activities focused on the client population. The VIDDRS staff participates annually in the White Cane Walk held in both districts to bring awareness to the challenges faced by the visually impaired population.

The Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD), in conjunction with Banco Popular, continues to provide low-interest loans to purchase assistive technology devices for individuals with disabilities. They also present mini-workshops on disability-related issues. Self-advocacy training for persons with disabilities is also provided. The St. Croix Career & Technical Educational and the Wheatley Skills Centers are operated by the Department of Education. They provide vocational and technical training in areas such as welding, millwright, computer repair, auto and diesel mechanic, cosmetology, food and beverage management, upholstery, carpentry, and many other vocational courses. Vocational Rehabilitation clients who demonstrate interest and potential are referred to both facilities for training. The Child Care Block Grant Program is a division within the Department of Human Services through which eligible mothers receive assistance with child care while actively seeking employment. This service extends after they have been placed in employment. Small Business Development Center (SBDC), is an entity with whom we have developed a working relationship. As part of our Entrepreneurship Services to qualified VR Clients, it is required that a business proposal be developed with the assistance of the SBDC. Clients who are interested in the Business Enterprise Program are required to attend seminars sponsored by SBDC. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program in collaboration with its partners, (Department of Labor, and the Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD) and the UVI Cooperative Extension Service (UVI-CES). The designated State Unit strives to maintain a professional relationship with the Client Assistance Program locally known as the Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands. They are invited to participate in workshops and VR sponsored events, VIDDRS is also invited to participate in parent forums and other activities as appropriate.

VIDDRS provides supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth, to achieve the employment outcome of supported employment in competitive integrated employment. This will be achieved through the expansion of our supported employment initiative to include the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD) and Island Therapy Solutions, STEP Program. Additionally, Independent job coaches will provide supported employment services for up to 24 months, with the option to increase as needed in special circumstances for up to four years post-placement. VIDDRS will continue to partner with the VI Department of Labor to ensure that a sound business engagement strategy is implemented to maximize opportunity for sustainable relationships and employment opportunities with businesses in the community. VIDDRS will utilize existing partnerships and establish new partnerships in the private sector to facilitate these extended services. Through these various collaborative efforts, the State Agency received more referrals, and partnerships were formed thus resulting in a more comprehensive service delivery.

2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

VIDDVR does not have a formal written agreement with the Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD); the lead agency carrying out activities under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. However, VIDDRS does maintain a close collaborative relationship with VIUCEDD, which includes VIDDRS representation on VIUCEDD's Advisory Council.

The AT Program in the U.S. Virgin Islands is called the Virgin Islands Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (VITRAID). VITRAID continues to increase the provision of, access to, and funding for assistive technology for residents of all ages and of all disabilities through a variety of comprehensive activities and services available across the territory.

VIUCEDD also includes The Virgin Islands Assistive Technology Foundation (VIATF). VITAF offers individuals with disabilities access to low-interest bank loans to purchase assistive

technology devices and services. Through the partnership with VIATF and Popular Bank; the interest cost of the loan is reduced through interest buy-down to a rate of 4 percent. Virgin Islands residents with disabilities and/or family members with disabilities are eligible for a loan; with expectation that all standard bank loan requirements, including the ability to repay the loan are met. VIATF review rejected loan applications and based on the reason(s) for rejection, bank loans maybe guaranteed by VIATF for applicants.

VIDDRS participants continues to have access to assistive technology devices, services, and consultations. As part of the vocational assessment process, VIDDRS counselors assess whether assistive technology (AT) services and/or devices are needed to address participants' barriers to employment. VIDDRS counselors continue to collaborate and coordinate service delivery with AT vendors on specialized AT assessments, AT services and products for VR participants. The requirements for the loan programs are based on the specific provider and may vary based on the device or services required. The VIDDRS does not have authority over the various loan programs as they are separate from the operations of the VIDDRS.

3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

At this time, there is no Agribility program or programs carried out by the Secretary for Rural Development under the Department of Agriculture in the U. S. Virgin Islands. In prior years, VIDDRS would partner with the Department of Agriculture to provide training opportunities for transitioning students that focused on the education and promotion of Agricultural Science. Future discussions on the continuation of such programs are warranted to ensure that this industry flourishes within the territory. VIDDRS continues to work with local farmers to engage students in developing their interests in Agriculture and to promote the farm to table lifestyle.

4. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

VIDDRS has not entered into any formal cooperative agreements with non-educational agencies not carrying out activities under the state workforce development system who serve out-of-school youths. However, VIDDRS collaborate with and refers VR participants to My Brother's Workshop (MBW) which is a nonprofit agency that caters to at-risk youths; as well as, youths that have drop-out of school. The program provides youths the opportunity for mentorship, vocational training, GED or High School Equivalency training, and job placement assistance. Additionally, VIDDRS refers VR participants and regularly collaborate with Job Corps to include VIDDRS participation and facilitation of VR participants with Job Corps admission process. Job Corps continues to communicate with VIDDRS in providing status updates and outcomes on VR participants. The VIDDRS works closely with the Divisions of Juvenile Justice and Foster Care to ensure that youths in the court system receive the appropriate transition services. The collaboration with these various programs and agencies have provided a comprehensive delivery of services that fosters a continuum of care and results in successful outcomes.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

The U.S. Virgin Islands Government requires a competitive bidding process for the purchasing of goods and services; the Government has no policy in which priorities are given to companies that hire individuals with disabilities. The VIDDRS is embarking on a contract with Geographic Solutions Inc. for the procurement of an electronic case management system. This contract has not been executed as it is currently under review by the procurement department of the government.

D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

1. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH

DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROCEDURES FOR THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

The Designated State coordinates with education officials through the Office of Special Education to provide pre-employment transition services to students. Education officials were oriented to the Pre-ETS services and they are intricately involved in referring students for said services. Information about VR services are made available at the local high schools. VIDDRS continues to provide presentations to students and school officials about the pre-employment transition services. Based on the agreement, both the VIDDRS and VIDOE, Special Education Services are equally responsible for ensuring that the student body receive these services. Students may apply for services or can be referred to the program and an individualized plan of employment will be developed for each student before they graduate from school. No eligible student will be denied. The pre-employment transition services will cover the five core subject areas, such as workplace readiness training, self-advocacy instruction, post-secondary education counseling, work based learning and career exploration. The VIDDRS held virtual trainings for pre employment transition students for six weeks throughout the summer and plans to continue the training into the school year. The trainings exposed students to assistive technology, community integration and various strategies for independent living. The students receive a certificate of completion to add to their portfolios.

VIDDRS has partnered with the Virgin Islands University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD) will be providing orientation on post-secondary education to transitioning students during the summer months for two weeks. The participants selected by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors attend the specialized sessions at the University campus which includes placement test preparation, workshops on campus life and faculty expectations aimed at increasing student success.

In addition, the VIDDRS collaborated with Virgin Islands Developmental Disabilities Council, VIDDC to provide Job Exploration and Independent Living Services to the transitioning student population. The year-long program will provided parent/caregivers training, leadership and self advocacy instruction as well as wrap-around services that include individual and group counseling, home and school visits as well as post-secondary education preparation.

Throughout the summer and after school, the participants will receive work experience through internships and on the job training opportunities. Placements are determined based on participants' interests and are provided by private and public sector employers. The participants are compensated in accordance with the Virgin Islands minimum wage and all employers are informed of the pay rate prior to placement. Participants are also informed of the rate of pay prior to employment as stipulated by section 511 of the Rehab Act. In an effort to promote an inclusive workforce and competitive employment, the U.S. Virgin Islands no longer have subminimum wage workshops or provides 14C certificates to employers.

Employers in the territory have identified skill gaps in the workforce in three specific categories: Soft Skills - to include customer service, punctuality and time management; Basic Academic foundational Skills - specifically math, writing and verbal language efficiency; Low Technological Skills - limited basic fluidity, limited knowledge of applications and web-based navigation. VIDDRS continues to maintain rapport with stakeholders of the local education agency to ensure a seamless Transition Services Procedure. A memorandum of agreement was drafted between the State Agency and State Education Agency that outlines the roles and responsibilities of each agency. The collaboration between the agencies continues to flourish. The agreement was initially executed in 2014 and should be updated every three to five years.

- VIDDRS continues to provide technical assistance to counselors on strategies for timely determination of eligibility and development of IPEs for youth with disabilities to ensure

that the IPE is developed before the student leaves high school and within 90 days from the date of eligibility for all students.

- VIDDRS conducts regular case reviews to provide a forum for counselors to discuss and share strategies that have been successful in addressing challenges.
- VIDDRS implemented a plan for identifying cases at day 45 for which eligibility has not been determined as follows: Transitioning applicants will be identified and flagged upon receipt of referral; cases that have been in applicant status for over 30 days will be reviewed and appropriate action taken once eligibility has been determined;
- VIDDRS monitors IPE development based on 90 days as stated in our policy manual. Quarterly case reviews will be conducted within the last two weeks of December, March, June, September to determine compliance with requirements for timely determination of eligibility and development of IPE. The goal is for 100% of IPEs to be developed within 90 days of eligibility determination.
- VIDDRS is committed to building its capacity; extended services will be provided to youths with the most significant disabilities to achieve the employment outcome of supported employment in competitive integrated employment. VIDDRS is working in partnership with the University of the Virgin Islands to develop innovative pathways that will allow individuals to access support services in "non-traditional" ways while helping to build the foundation for achievement of sustainable accomplishments. Independent job coaches may provide supported employment services for up to 24 months, with the option to increase as needed in special circumstances.
- VIDDRS is in the process of updating its policy and procedure manual to reflect the processes and coordination with other agencies for the delivery of transition services.
- VIDDRS will continue outreach to include unserved and underserved students on opportunities for participation in Pre-ETS activities. Outreach activities will also include presentations for students, youths, families, community partners, schools and education officials; as well as, outreach at career fairs on VR services, labor regulations, and employment related information.

2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

The agreement between the agencies outlines that VIDOE will assist in identifying students who may be in need of services and VIDDRS will provide the technical assistance in the development of plans and provide counseling as needed. The financial responsibility rest on both agencies and the cost will be split depending on the service. The following includes some of the terms of the mutual agreement.

- 1. The Designated State provides training to Special Education officials and school counselors so that students can be identified and referred for transition services.**
- 2. VR Counselors are invited to attend IEP meetings for eligible students with disabilities as appropriate and anticipate service needs;**
- 3. VIDDRS work with the local workforce development board, One-Stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for students with disabilities;**

4. VIDDRS develop guidelines and provide technical assistance on the implementation of this Agreement to LEA personnel, parents and students;
5. Counselors notify relevant transition team participants to include education officials of student eligibility determination and appeal process;
6. VIDDRS assist in the development of an Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) with eligible students before the student leaves the high school setting and within 90 days of their eligibility determination;
7. There are several meetings held with students and teachers to provide an overview of the transition services and the offerings provided by VR to include transition planning, counseling, training and career exploration. The VIDDRS provides flyers and additional resources about transition services.

VIDDRS consult regularly in person, via telephone and/or media conferences with secondary schools and local educational agencies to provide technical assistances on transition planning for students with disabilities from school to post-secondary activities.

When a formal dispute arises between the parties, the issue will be referred to the appropriate administrator of the respective agency for resolution. If the issue remains unresolved, it will be referred to as the highest-level administrator within each agency for resolution. All necessary steps in the resolution process will occur within thirty (30) days from the initial referral. If the dispute remain unresolved, the issue will be referred to the Attorney General, Department of Justice, to make recommendations to the Governor's Office for a final determination by the Governor, which will be binding on all parties.

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

U. S. Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDOE) and VIDDRS continue to work collaboratively to facilitate interagency planning as well as collaboration with other agencies to assist in the referral of students to appropriate pre-employment transition services and develop strategies that support the career development pathways of students with disabilities leading to career and college readiness.

Transition services are available to students with disabilities beginning at age 14 and there are no age requirements for transition or VR services. A plan is developed between the State Agency and the Virgin Islands Department of Education to facilitate said services annually. The agencies meet on a regular basis to discuss and coordinate services as needed. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are invited to attend IEP meetings on a regular basis. Education officials are notified of transitioning services for students with disabilities. All eligible or potentially eligible students, their parents and education officials receive written information regarding how to access services. The counselors are directly involved in securing employment sites for students to complete work-based learning activities. There is ongoing communication between VR and the state education agency to address concerns and/or changes in services. Prior to the start of the new school year, the agreement is reviewed and updated with the Virgin Islands Department of Education to reflect changes as it relates to transition planning and required precautions. VIDOE assist in providing on the job training to students which includes the five core areas. VIDDRS facilitates job placement and provide support in developing transition plans in coordination with the student's IEP.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

The VIDDRS staff is actively engaged in the implementation of the student's IEP, collaborating in the planning, referral and identification of students with disabilities who may benefit from VR services as early as possible in the transition process. This ensures that transition services and pre-employment services goals on a student's IPE are aligned. VR services should complement services provided by schools but not replace those services. Once a student is accepted for placement, the designated state agency assumes the financial responsibility and compensates students in accordance with the Virgin Islands minimum wage. Both agencies are required to maintain an open line of communication in regard to the student's success and/or lack thereof. VIDE will be responsible for Special Education services under free and appropriate public education; VIDDRS is responsible for providing VR Services in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act.

The local education agency, LEA will provide the general supervision of the IDEA in the Virgin Islands for special education and related services to ensure a free appropriate public education for students with disabilities. Serve as the lead agency in the development, revision, and maintenance of cooperative efforts among the collaborating agencies to facilitate the successful transition of students with disabilities. The LEA will convene quarterly meetings, or as needed, to evaluate the transition process and recommend system changes; Coordinate with VR for the dissemination of information to local education agencies (LEAs) regarding effective, results-based practices for students with disabilities to be prepared for postsecondary education/training, employment and independent living. The VIDDRS distributes the "VR Information Packet" to LEAs, students and parents to ensure that all students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services have the opportunity to participate. Pre-employment transition services begin at age 14; the student may or may not have IEP to qualify for transition services.

The State agency will provide the following five activities to students with disabilities (i) job exploration counseling; (ii) work-based learning opportunities; (iii) counseling on post-secondary educational opportunities; (iv) workplace readiness training; and (v) instruction in self-advocacy. The VIDDRS will attend IEP meetings for students with disabilities when invited and anticipate service needs. The VIDDRS will work in collaboration with local workforce development boards, One-Stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for students with disabilities. Develop guidelines and provide technical assistance on the implementation of this Agreement to LEA personnel, parents, and students. Notify relevant transition team participants of student eligibility determination and appeal process. Develop an Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) with eligible students, before the student leaves the school setting and within 90 days of eligibility determination.

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

VIDDRS collaborates with SEA/LEA on activities to identify outreach activities aimed at increasing the number of students with disabilities who need transition services. VIDDRS make Pre-ETS services available to all students with disabilities that have IEPs, including those with a 504 plan, beginning at age 14, and prior to the student exiting secondary education.

Outreach activities include:

- VIDDRS counselors participate in IEP meetings and provide information on VIDDRS services, to include application information about Pre-Employment Transition Services. The program's fact sheet, referral form and flyer advertising services are provided to students and their families.
- VIDDRS has representation on the SEA/LEA Capacity Building team to develop territorial plan for transitioning students that will be inclusive of Pre-ETS requirements.

The plan includes action steps that each agency's responsibility to promote the core principles for transition.

- LEA provides referrals and supporting documentation to VIDDRS on a regular basis.
- VIDDRS and SEA/LEA share training and information materials for cross-training and professional development. Transition planning for students requires an ongoing multi-agency collaboration with dialog between the student with their families and other stakeholders, such as the U. S. Virgin Islands Department of Labor and Department of Education. This coordination between the partner agencies will ensure accurate information is shared and services are made readily available.
- VIDDRS will continue to educate the general public through regular TV and radio presentations, social media and public service announcements.

E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

The VIDDRS has several cooperative agreements with private non-profit organizations. In accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the designated state unit continues to strengthen agreements with Private Non-Profit Agencies. These agreements allow students and adults with significant disabilities to develop skills which result in employment sustainability and stabilization. The designated state agency continues to collaborate with other agencies and organizations that focus on students with disabilities such as the Virgin Islands Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc. (VIDDC). The VIDDC in collaboration with VIDDRS provided Pre-ets services to in-school transitioning students. The services exposed the interested students to career exploration, self-advocacy, and independent living skills training. These services were provided to educate and enhance the student's ability to access/navigate post-secondary services. Those services were provided on a fee for service basis.

The VIDDRS also partners with the University affiliated program, Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD) to provide Supported Employment services. This allowed interested persons in the community to receive training in job coaching. Individuals were selected to work with the participants who needs this vital services. They conducted assessment, job placement and provided long term support. These services were paid for based on a milestone basis.

The Virgin Islands Association for Independent Living (IL) plays a vital role in teaching independent Living skills to Vocational Rehabilitation participants who are visually impaired and interested in the coordination of attendant care services, mobility training and integration in community affairs. The Independent Living program was paid a fee for services provided.

The Disability Rights Center/CAP of the Virgin Islands provides advocacy and referral services. This ensures accessibility to services and community resources. They also conduct workshops for parents of students with disabilities and education officials. They facilitate presentations on various disabling conditions; and information relation to transitioning. The VIDDRS staff has been invited to make in-person presentations at these workshops, and also participated on radio talk shows that focus on the needs of persons living with a disability.

F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Supported Employment (SE) Services are provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities for up to 24 months or age 25 whichever one comes first. These services provide ongoing support, including customized employment along with appropriate services needed to support and maintain individuals with most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities. The SE services are organized and made available, singly or in combination, and in such a way as to assist eligible individuals to achieve competitive integrated

employment. This is done based on a needs assessment and appropriate services are outlined in the Individualized Plan for Employment.

The VIDDRS has partnered with the university-affiliated program, Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities to provide Supported Employment Services. Job coaches were trained to conduct assessments, job development, appropriate job placements, career coaching, and extended support services. If individuals surpass the age requirement and they will continue to receive the designated services from the Vocational Rehabilitation funds. However, only youths with the most significant disabilities qualify for extended employment services.

In an effort to recruit, certify, and maintain job coaches, the State Agency in collaboration with VIUCEDD is in contact with a provider to facilitate ongoing training to candidates interested in becoming certified job coaches. Historically, the VIDDRS has faced many challenges with the provision of supported employment services. Due to the uniqueness of the population, and the geographical location of the territory, VIDDRS has seen a steady decline in job coaches. The program has been meeting with a local private provider to secure these services for its consumers.

As mandated by WIOA, VIDDRS engaged in an initiative with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) and Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD), to facilitate employment for individuals with significant disabilities. The VIDDRS coordinates with the Department of Labor to provide work-based learning experiences and apprenticeship training to individuals. Prior to job placement, they are oriented about employer expectations and their responsibilities as employees. Once placed, the individuals are monitored and supported throughout their training.

The VIDDRS continues to collaborate with private non-profit service providers who are able to provide supported employment in limited fields. VIDDRS continues to work with clients to develop natural supports to include employers, family members, and other local programs that serve our target population. The agency will continue to explore available options for funding the provision of extended supports. In accordance with WIOA, the VR Program continues to partner with the VI Department of Labor (VIDOL) to facilitate employment services for VR clients. VIDDRS is currently present in the job center weekly working with the client populous. Through this partnership, VIDDRS to serve VR eligible individuals who are attempting to navigate the Virgin Islands Department of Labor. VIDDRS collaborates with DOL to access on the job training and other job services available to support our clients. VIDDRS continues to concentrate its efforts on educating interested parties regarding the process of becoming a non-traditional provider source for supported employment services. A variety of supported employment provider choices are needed, particularly due to the lack of "factory-type" businesses in the territory. VIDDRS continues to focus on providing technical assistance and coordinating training for vendors of supported employment services to VIDDRS staff members, and staff members of other public and private agencies such as DOL and DOE. VIDDRS developed a relationship with VIUCEDD and we continue to pursue evidence-based practices to favorably impact supported employment outcomes. VIDDRS provides supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth, to achieve the employment outcome of supported employment in competitive integrated employment. This is achieved through the expansion of our supported employment initiative to include the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD). Additionally, independent job coaches provide supported employment services for up to 24 months, with the option to increase as needed in special circumstances. VIDDRS will continue to partner with the VI Department of Labor to ensure that a sound business engagement strategy is implemented to maximize the opportunity for sustainable relationships and employment opportunities with local businesses in the community. VIDDRS utilizes existing partnerships and establish new partnerships in the private sector to facilitate these extended services. The fee for this service

will be covered by the Supported Employment and Title I funds to ensure the required support services are available to persons with significant disabilities.

The Virgin Islands Association for Independent Living is a partner that continues to provide independent living skills and mobility training to individuals with the most significant disabilities. In addition, the Designated State Unit and the Virgin Islands Association for Independent Living are developing projects and extending services to individuals who are older with visual impairments to improve their independence at home and in the community.

G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

1. VR SERVICES; AND

The VIDDRS partner with a variety of employers in the community to provide employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Employers are solicited by the VIDDRS based on the employment goals set by individuals. The employers provide on the job training, apprenticeship training, internships, and a host of internal supports to ensure success in the workplace. The VIDDRS recognize the employers as community partners for hiring individuals with disabilities.

VIDDRS also works collaboratively with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor, Employment and Training Division to implement a seamless system for employer engagement to facilitate career opportunities in the demand occupations within the territory which include Administrative and support services, Allied health, construction trades, information technology, leisure and hospitality, retail and transportation and logistics. The Designated State Agency maintains healthy relationships with employers to ensure seamless job placements and transfer current information about available tax credits and benefits. The program continues to recognize employers that have made significant contributions to the program through the presentations of awards, letters of recognition, and/ or acknowledgment on different media platforms. This will encourage employers to continue working with the program and its consumers. State Agency will continue to engage in similar initiatives to engage employers in the upcoming program years.

The VIDDRS held recognition ceremonies for employers and participants that successfully completed the Annual Summer Youth Employment Training Program. Employers received awards for their willingness to partner with the program and carry out the requirements. The annual summer work training experience is paid 6-week apprenticeship program. Students were placed in various job opportunities based on their career interests and skills. The program proved to be extremely successful as some participants were offered full-time employment based on their performances.

VIDDRS held employment fairs in both districts where employers were able to meet with prospective candidates. Attendees were provided with an opportunity to learn about the job market, current vacancies, and possibilities for training. The job fair catered to persons with disabilities and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors were on hand to assist individuals with completing applications and working through the pre-screening process. The VIDDRS works closely with the American Job Center to enhance our approach to business engagement. The agency meets with potential employers to secure and place participants in employment opportunities. Continued collaboration with local employers will be a priority for the VIDDRS and plans to host interest meetings with employers that would like to become community partners.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

The VIDDRS Coordinates with the Local Education Agency (LEA) officials and the Virgin Islands Department of Education as the State Educational Agency ("SEA"), and through its State Office of Special Education ("SOSE") to ensure that each eligible student with a disability is provided with a free and appropriate public education in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA"), 20 USC § 1400(d). The purpose of this agreement is to support the transition of eligible students with disabilities from secondary to post-secondary activities. The VIDDRS team attends Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings when invited. This ensure that students with disabilities and their families are informed about the services provided by the VIDDRS. Eligibility for services are determined within 30 days, and Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) are developed and approved within 90 days. As mandated by the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act, the VIDDRS partner with the LEA, through the SOSE to provide Work-based Learning Experiences to students. This Pre-ets activity is provided in conjunction with the teachers and private providers.

The VIDDRS shall ensure that an inter-agency agreement, or another mechanism for inter-agency coordination is in effect between each non-educational public agency and the VIDOE, as required by the IDEA, and its provision of a free appropriate public education to eligible students with disabilities. The VIDDRS disseminate information to the LEA regarding effective, results-based practices for students with disabilities to be prepared for post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment including supported employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation; Ensure that the collaborating parties to this Agreement meet quarterly or as needed to evaluate the transition process and recommend system changes. VIDDRS will provide professional development and technical assistance activities for the LEA, and other public and private agencies, parents/guardians/students/ surrogates on topics related to transition planning and adult service activities. Provide training in conjunction with the VIDDRS regarding Pre-employment Transition Services and inter-agency service linkages, and distribute the "VIDDRS Information Packet" for LEAs to provide to students with disabilities age 14 and older. The Information Packet will include the VIDDRS services and contact information. The VIDDRS as a State Agency federally mandated to collaborate with the SOSE agrees to designate at least one member from its respective divisions to attend conference/meetings pertaining to the implementation of this Interagency Agreement, and for planning and implementing the services required by the student's IEP. The VIDDRS develop guidelines on the implementation of this agreement and train state and local-level staff regarding those guidelines; provide services to students who meet the eligibility criteria, attend IEP meetings for students beginning at age 14, provide consultation and technical assistance to aid LEA in planning for the transition of eligible students as needed; conduct educational/informational workshops to interested students, parents/advocates on the VIDDRS process and where referrals may be accepted; develop an Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) with eligible participants prior to the student leaving the school setting. Notify relevant transition team participants of student eligibility determination and appeal process; Provide Pre-employment Transition Services to interested students as outlined by the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act. VIDDRS will provide services that are legally their responsibility for those transitioning youth who are of working age and those who are determined to be eligible for services by VIDDRS. The VIDDRS provides transitioning students with the opportunity to engage in Work-based Learning Experiences based on their career interests. In house services are provided directly to youths with disabilities and the state Agency partners with the Department of labor to provide employment readiness services to out of school youths.

The VIDDRS is a untapped resource for employers that are seeking to hire qualified and educated individuals. Employers are beginning to realize that they can rely on the VIDDRS to assist with providing the necessary supports for individuals with disabilities. The plan is to

expand the program's ability to engage more employers by hiring Employment Related Specialists that will focus on marketing and building a relationship with the business communities. It is really joint effort between VIDDRS and its private, core, and community partners. With the help of the Workforce Investment Board, the VIDDRS has begun creating these relationships and the VR Counselors play a key role in connecting our population with employers. As we continue to grow these relationships, it will be a win win situation for all involved as it will lead to more successful employment outcomes and encourage a robust economy while assisting employers with filling their vacancies.

H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

Both VIDDRS and the Medicaid Assistance Program (MAP) are under the same DSA. The programs have a collaborative relationship as it relates to shared clients and referral of clients. Existing information such as medical reports and other financial data are shared as necessary. The staff is required to collaborate with MAP to ensure that consumers are following through with the appropriate requirements for services. The VIDDRS continues to refer participants who are unable to obtain health insurance through employment and other means to the MAP for coverage. More individuals in the Virgin Islands are now qualified to receive these services as a result of the Medicaid expansion.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

The VIDDRS sits on the board for the Virgin Islands Developmental Disabilities Council and actively participates in making decisions that will affect change and promote inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities living in the territory. The VIDDRS partners with VIDDC to coordinate services for this specific population in areas such as accessibility to transportation, employment, recreation, housing, and inclusion. State Agency has partnered with VIDDC on a Pre-Employment Transition Summer initiative. However, this partnership did not result in improved competitive integrated employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. The VIDDRS is currently engaged in a nationwide study with the State of States of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities that will provide results to assist in identifying the territory's resources and available services to this population.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

The VIDDRS collaborates with the Virgin Islands Department of Health, Division of Mental Health, VIDOH to provide mental health services to its consumers. This includes Psychiatric Evaluation assessments, and out-patient medication and therapeutic services. Through the VIDDRS partnership with the Department of Education to deliver Pre-employment Transition Services, the Division of Mental Health collaborates in the delivery of health information to the transitioning youth. Mental Health services in the territory are extremely limited. Therefore, many cases private providers are utilized to ensure the delivery of these services. The agencies interact on a consistent basis to facilitate the required services.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

1. SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

I. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY;

The Designated State Agency is comprised of fourteen (14) full-time employees, (11) Classified, and (3) Exempt positions:

(1) Territorial Program Administrator

(2) District Managers, one in each district-St. Thomas/St. John District and St. Croix District.

(6) Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors-(1) III, (2) II & (3) I-Currently, there are 3 VR Counselors in each district.

(4) Support and Administrative Staff- (1) Administrative Assistant, (1) Vocational Rehab Aide, (1) Computer Support Specialist, and (1) Executive Administrative Assistant.

The VIDDRS experienced major transitions within the last few years. There are several vacancies within the unit to include two (2) full-time Vocational Counselor positions, one needed in each district, a Federal Grant Monitor, Administrative Assistant, and the Assistant Administrator position.

The deficiency in the personnel places an extreme burden on the current staff members. The Designated State unit continues to advocate for the needs of the staff. In the past several years, the agency experienced a significant turnover in the Management of the Human Resources division. Thus, creating a delay in the hiring and on-boarding of new staff members. The current combined caseload from both the St. Thomas/St. John District and St. Croix District are approximately 345 active cases. The division served over 400 individuals with disabilities in the past program year. Considering that the population faced significant challenges to include job displacement in the aftermath of the hurricanes and now as a result of the pandemic, it is projected that the number of individuals served will continue to increase by at least 50 within the coming years. Adequate staffing will be key factor in accommodating the increased number of consumers.

Exempt positions are created by statute or executive order of the Governor. These positions are not covered by a collective bargaining unit or agreement. They do not receive overtime pay or benefit from salary negotiations. Classified employees are members of a local union and benefit from all the terms within the contractual agreement.

The VIDDRS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are required to be highly qualified and CRC certified. The minimum qualification for the VR counselor position is a Bachelor's Degree in Social Sciences, Rehabilitation Counseling, or a closely related field. Promotion requires a Master's Degree plus two-plus years of experience in the field. Possession of National Rehabilitation Counselor Certification must be completed.

II. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

Approximately eight (8) personnel are currently needed by State agency to provide VR Services and they are as follows: Assistant Administrator (1-STT district), Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (2, one in each district), Administrative Assistant (1-STX district), Federal Grant Monitor (1-Territorial) Rehab Specialist Supervisor (1-STT district) Executive Administrative Assist (1-Territorial) and Project Director (1-STX district). The Assistant Administrator, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors along with the Federal Grant Monitor are considered to be critical hires. Through our affiliation with the University of the Virgin Islands and the recent influx of professionals relocating to the territory, VIDDRS don't anticipate difficulty in recruiting qualified individuals. Currently, two of the six counselors have Graduate Degrees and one staff

member is enrolled in the Master's Degree Program with an expected graduation date of May this year.

III. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

It is expected with the existing vacancies filled, the VIDDRS staff will be able to serve the projected individuals that are eligible for VR services. Currently, there are three staff members that are less than 5 years away from retirement. The Assistant Administrator and Federal Grant Monitor retired several years back and one of the VR Counselors relocated shortly after the storms. The Division needs at least two additional VR Counselors, a Federal Grant Monitor, Assistant Administrator, Administrative Officer, and Program Coordinator to accommodate the growing population in the next 5 years based on the projections. The VIDDRS has to aggressively recruit personnel and is committed to working with our new Deputy Commissioner of Human Resources to ensure that succession planning is implemented. Securing the appropriate personnel in the next five years is extremely crucial to the success and survival of the program. Based on projections of individuals requesting service in the next 5 years and staff approaching retirement, the VIDDRS will need the following personnel:

- 1 District Manager
- 1 Federal Grant Monitor
- 1 Computer Support Specialist
- 1 Executive Administrative Assistant
- 1 Assistant Administrator
- 1 Program Coordinator
- 1 Administrative Assistant
- 2 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, one in each district.

B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

I. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM;

There is currently one institution of higher education within the territory; the University of the Virgin Islands offers certified undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Some of these programs are in the field of Accounting, Social Work, Psychology, Education, Nursing, Marine Science, Public and Business Administration. Unfortunately, the university does not provide a degree program or courses in Rehabilitation Counseling. There are options available online. Staff interested in a graduate program must enroll in an institution on the U.S. mainland or online learning. Currently, two VR staff/ counselors have acquired their master degrees at the University and one staff is enrolled in the Masters Psychology Program. The counselors are encouraged to secure their CRC; information and resources have been shared pertaining to acquiring the required certification.

II. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND

Currently, two of the six counselors have Masters Degrees from the University of the Virgin Islands and one staff is pursuing a Master's Degree in Psychology with an expected graduation date of May this year.

III. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

At this time, there are no staff members that recently received said certification and or licensure. However, one VR Counselor enrolled in a training course in preparation for certification.

2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

VIDDRS complies with the requirement to hire and recruit personnel from minority backgrounds and persons with disabilities. The VIDDRS plan to address the current projected needs include a five-year strategic plan that will assist with the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel. The plan outlines the collaborative relationship between the state agency, community partners, and the University of the Virgin Islands to develop a pipeline for prospective candidates. The University will also assist with professional development training of current personnel and VIDDRS will provide ongoing training opportunities. Recruitment of qualified personnel will remain open to applicants from the mainland and other neighboring Caribbean islands. The University of the Virgin Islands does not offer Rehabilitation Counseling degrees or certifications, however, they have degrees in closely related fields such as Psychology, Social Sciences and Counseling. The University can assist with ensuring that personnel remain current and relevant in the field. The community partners that serve various populations continue to make recommendations and provide referrals to the program for prospective hires. VIDDRS will analyze current hiring strategies and implement new techniques to improve recruitment and retention efforts.

There is not a high turnover of staff in the Virgin Islands, majority of the staff has been with VIDDRS for over 5 years. However, promotion and appropriate compensation in comparison to other VR program is a challenge. The disparity in wages is a major factor as the average salary is at least \$15, 000 to 20, 000 difference.

3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

Traditionally, the Designated State Unit has adhered to standards set by the State Civil Service System which are consistent with the highest entry-level academic degree of a B.A. in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling or a related field, needed for professions in this category. As there are no State approved or recognized certification, licensing or registration requirements for rehabilitation counselors; the Designated State Unit has based its personnel standards for counselors on those needed to meet the national Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) requirement which is a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or a related field or other master's degree that meets the CRC specifications. Deadlines and a written plan for personnel to meet the CRC requirements have been established. The Head of the designated State Agency is very supportive of the State Unit's recruitment efforts. Job specifications for Rehabilitation Counselors were revised to reflect a graduate degree as the minimum entry-level requirement. This revision has increased the entry-level salary and hopefully increases the pool of interested candidates. The State Agency posts its vacancies online with the Human Relations Division and

throughout various government offices, The agency often attends college fairs at the local high schools and college campuses to recruit and promote services.

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

VIDDRS is working collaboratively with State Workforce Board and other stakeholders to ensure that ongoing training is available to VR personnel. VIUCEDD, LEA, and other training providers have provided technical assistance in this area to ensure that VR personnel is equipped with the tools required to address the complex challenges that confront VR consumers. The staff is stationed at various times in the American Job Center and are exposed to the evolving labor force and are on the front line with addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

Staff is engaged in a series of trainings facilitated by the Workforce technical assistance team (WINTAC). The training address various topics pertaining to the delivery of VR, SE, and OILB services. In addition, staff usually attend the annual spring and fall conferences held by the Council for State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation. The state agency also utilizes the guidance and policy directives from RSA that govern assistive technology, job placement, and vocational training; staff is strongly encouraged to participate in webinars and other training opportunities. The State agency coordinates regularly with VIUCEED to train staff on the new technology and available assistive devices; training is usually scheduled two-three times a year that demonstrates how the devices are used and how consumers can qualify for assistance to fund these devices. VIDDRS will continue to make these trainings available to staff by partnering with other partners and stakeholders such as Hear Again Audiological Services.

B. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.

Information and resources are shared amongst staff via email, flyers, and handouts. Staff is encouraged to register with technical assistance entities to receive relevant and current data that will benefit the clientele. Through the national websites, staff can access information and participate in online sessions that enhance their professional development. Case conferences, reviews, and meetings are held monthly to give staff an opportunity to share knowledge and available resources.

5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

VIDDRS obtains services of other individuals who are able to communicate in other modes of communication on behalf of the consumer. Sign language interpreters are retained for those persons that require that service. Spanish speaking personnel are also utilized as translators to relay information from the program to the applicant; consumers are allowed to include a trusted family member or friend as part of the application process. VIDDRS supports staff is interested in acquiring these skills to aid in the provision of services.

6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

The VIDDRS actively collaborates with the Virgin Islands Department of Education and State Office Special Education in its capacity building initiatives. Counselors are involved in the transition planning process for students with disabilities and attend IEP meetings on a regular basis. Personnel from the VIDDRS, VIDOL and VIDOE participates in trainings and events sponsored by all the partner agencies. There are plans to develop a WIOA work plan that forge a closer relationship with the educational and labor officials; the plan will support efforts already established and provide more opportunities to work together. Currently, we are in the process of updating the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the partner agencies. The agreement outlines the responsibilities and joint goals that will facilitate the coordination of personnel under the IDEA. The plan for the upcoming program years is to enhance communication and collaboration with VIDOE and VIDOL to ensure that information shared across agencies, services are provided to improve successful outcomes and relationships are strengthened.

J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

The need for Supported Employment services are as follows:

The VIDDRS has encountered numerous challenges in providing supported employment services. The division continues to seek out certified job coaches to assist in the provision these services. Community Rehabilitation Programs that focuses on building skill sets and adequately preparing the significantly disabled for employment have been discontinued. Supported employment initiatives are crucial and will boost the consumer's confidence as well as lead to successful outcomes. Sensitivity training for employers and the community is also needed as the lack of information in this area can become a barrier to employment. There is a great need in the territory for certified job coaches and mental health professionals to assist with the growing needs of individuals with significant disabilities. Ongoing soft skills training will be a great benefit with a focus on advocacy. Another significant need of persons with significant disabilities residing in the U.S. Virgin Islands is the lack of available and reliable transportation. The last Combined Statewide Needs Assessment was completed in 2016 and is scheduled to be updated in the upcoming program year. The VISRC committee members have met and are having discussions with the University of the Virgin Islands to assist in conducting the combined needs assessment. An actual date will be identified at the SRC meeting scheduled for the latter part of this year.

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

The U.S. Virgin Islands is surrounded by a number of neighboring islands. As a result, there are different groups of minorities that migrate to the territory. Based on the last census completed in 2010, the population consist of 76% African American, 15.7% White, 1.4% Asian, 4.9% other and 2.1% mixed. The minority groups are Asians, Caucasians and Hispanics along with individuals with cognitive and psychiatric disabilities, the homeless and or indigent, persons with language barriers and individuals with prior criminal convictions. VIDDRS is committed to improving visibility of VR services for minorities with disabilities. Transportation, housing and

accessibility to client services are some of the major needs of minorities living in the Virgin Islands.

C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

The underserved and unserved are those individuals that require supported employment services; the program experienced challenges in retaining certified job coaches to work said population. Therefore, the VIDDRS is exploring other viable options of providing this service. Additionally, individuals with prior a criminal history or recently released from incarceration may be considered as underserved by the program due to limited supports and resources.

D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

The State Workforce Development System comprises of various professionals in different sectors of government and private businesses and organizations. The VIDDRS counselors have a regular presence in the VI Job Centers and as such, all workforce services which are beneficial to VR consumers are utilized such as job readiness workshops and seminars, individualized career counseling, and job search, training, and referrals. Dislocated workers and out of school youths are serviced by other agencies affiliated with the Workforce Board. The VIDDRS has also referred participants to the Department of Labor vocational training programs such as fiber optics and welding. Some participants are also referred to the Department of Education Adult Education diploma and certification program.

E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

Youths with disabilities are those individuals that may or may not be in school under the age of 24 but older than 21 years of age. Students with disabilities are considered those individuals with cognitive and physical impairments that are in school and under the age of 21. There is a need for continued coordination with LEA to facilitate pre-employment transition and transition services. These services will promote job readiness and engagement of the workforce system while identifying potential career opportunities for this population. Transition services also act as a deterrent for those students that have behavioral issues or have been adjudicated delinquent.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

VIDDRS considers the need to establish, develop and or improve CRP within the state as it will greatly assist with building capacity. The CRP's are limited mainly due to our geographic location and limited providers. The VIDDRS plans to partner with the Center for Independent Living to develop a curriculum and training program for individuals with disabilities that would benefit from this type of setting. The community rehabilitation Program will facilitate adjustment training and development of independent living skills for persons with disabilities. Currently, there is great need for the support services provided by service providers and CRP. Recently, the VIDDRS forged a relationship with Island Therapy Solutions to provide similar services.

3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

VIDDRS collaborates with education officials to provide pre-employment transition services. Jointly with the Virgin Islands Department of Education, VIDOE, the VIDDRS began an on the job training program and work based learning activities for transitioning students. The students are offered the opportunity to gain work experience for the summer at employment sites based on their career interests. The VIDDRS provides ongoing support to the VIDOE at various IEP and parent/student meetings. Presentations and written materials are made to the student body and education officials on the services available to transition students.

The Workforce Investment Board and the Economic Development Authority is comprised of the advisory and policy development segment of the Workforce system. The VIWIB has coordinated a partnership effort that places additional focus on three vulnerable priority groups; although receiving services this partnership can serve to be more effective and to maximize employment potential. The groups are the disabled population, veterans and out of school youth. As employment opportunities shrink and become more competitive, disabled workers are forced to acquire even more skills and competencies to become employable. VIDDRS plans to coordinate with the VIWIB to incorporate presentations on available VR services into quarterly meetings with employers, core partners and stakeholders.

By adapting the career pathway model, the VIDDRS hopes to assist individuals with disabilities attain the skills needed to enter and advance in the workforce. This creates an avenue for employers to have the option to choose their employees from a large pool of highly qualified individuals.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES

Due to the impact of the natural disasters in 2017, many residents in the U.S. Virgin islands were forced to relocate . This led to a decline in the number of persons applying for VR services. In FFY 2020, the VIDDRS served 345 participants who were eligible for VR services. However, in FFY 2021, the VIDDRS estimates that 480 participants with disabilities will be eligible to receive VR services using Title I funds.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

Due to economic growth in the Virgin Islands, it is anticipated that there will be an increase in the population. The VIDDRS served approximately 345 consumers in FFY 2020 and estimates that in FFY 2021, 480 eligible participants with disabilities will receive VR services using Title I funds.

In FY 2022, it is projected that 515 participants will be eligible for VR services using Title I funds, and the number of individuals eligible for VR services will continue to show a steady increase.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

The VIDDRS estimates for FFY 2020 approximately 12 eligible participants will receive Supported Employment services at a cost of \$2,348.00 per participant. The VIDDRS estimates in FFY 2021, 20 individuals with the most significant disabilities will receive Supported Employment services using Title I funds to supplement those services.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

The state agency is not implementing an Order of Selection.

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

The VIDDRS is not implementing an order of selection.

4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

The U. S. Virgin Islands does not operate under an order of selection nor is the state agency implementing an order. For FFY 2020, VIDDRS served an estimated 345 individuals received VR services using Title I funds at a average cost of \$6, 676.24 per client; and 12 eligible individuals would receive supported employment services at a average cost of \$2, 348 per client using Title VI funds. The total cost of services in FFY 2020 totals to \$2, 331,482.

Based on projections for FFY 2021, VIDDRS estimated 480 eligible individuals would receive VR services using Title I funds at a average cost of \$5, 475.55 per client; and 20 eligible individuals would receive supported employment services at average cost of \$2, 500 per client using Title VI funds. The overall total cost of services for FFY 2021 are estimated at \$2, 628,264.

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS

The goals and priorities that were jointly agreed upon by the VISRC and VIDDRS are as follows:

Increased Visibility and Improved Service Delivery-The State Agency needs to be more visible in the community to individuals with disabilities and stakeholders. The VIDDRS will commit to providing high-quality customer service to all eligible individuals to assist them in obtaining employment consistent with their chosen career pathways. Engage in a media campaign that will promote the service offered by the VIDDRS on various platforms to included social media. This will forge new community partnerships.

Promote Pre-Employment Transition Services- The VIDDRS needs to host regular information sessions to students, educators, and parents. The VIDDRS held several forums with students with disabilities and education officials to orient them to available resources and services. The program continues to collaborate with the Virgin Islands Department of Education on various training initiatives that address the five core areas-Job Exploration, Work-based Learning, Post Secondary Education Counseling, Work Place Readiness, and Instruction in Self Advocacy.

New Community Partnerships will increase the number of individuals applying for services. The VIDDRS has to connect more with Government agencies and the private sector to adequately address areas the needs of the population. Supported Employment services is an area that the VIDRRS has struggled with due to the lack of certified job coaches. Recently, the VIDDRS partnered with a private provider to facilitate these services to the individuals with the most significant with disabilities.

Staff development and hire new personnel-The VIDDRS is currently understaffed and needs to recruit new personnel to address the increasing caseloads. Another priority area is staff development and succession planning as there staff members that are close to retirement. The transfer of knowledge is extremely important to ensure that VIDDRS continues to evolve

Improve service delivery, update Case Services Manual and Procure an electronic Case Management System. The VIDDRS will have the ability to reach more consumers through the use of technology. The State Agency is in the process of updating the case manual and securing

an electronic case management system that will improve its ability to connect with its consumers, vendors, and partners, as well as stakeholders.

The achievement of the state goals and priorities will be measured by the customer satisfaction and needs surveys and reports from stakeholders

2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

The state goals and priorities were developed based on the recommendations from the State Rehabilitation Council and discussions with the Workforce Board and various community partners. Some of the main goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs are as follows:

1. Goal # 1: Improve Employment Outcomes

P1: Develop a year-round employment training program that focuses on building their skill set and adequately prepares consumers for competitive employment. The support from this program will boost consumer's confidence and lead to their success on the job.

P2: Provide Sensitivity training for employers and the community to remove the stigma from hiring an individual with disabilities and educate on the required accommodations.

2. Goal# 2: Increase the number of qualified job coaches to strengthen the VIDDRS support employment offerings

P1: Continue partnership with VIUCEDD to recruit, train, and maintain certified job coaches in both districts.

P2: Collaborate with community and private providers to assist with providing services to this population.

P3: Explore the possibility of hiring new personnel to address the shortfall of SE services.

3. Goal# 3: Promote and advertise the VR program through the use of social media, television and public service announcements.

P1: Distribute printed material on the available services to local businesses and government agencies

P2: Utilize Social Media, create radio/tv ads, and purchase radio slots to announce to the listening and viewing public about VR and SE offerings for persons with disabilities.

P3: Continue pursuing the implementation of the electronic case management system.

Goal#4: Enhance Collaboration with the community and core partners, employers, and stakeholders to ensure that consumers receive best quality of service.

P1: Continue to be a presence in the One Stop Center to meet the need of prospective consumers and educate others about the need for inclusion in the workforce.

P2: Update existing Memorandums of Understanding, MOU, and develop new agreements with partners.

After review of the goals and objectives, not all the goals were met and will continue to be a priority over the next four years. The VIDDRS is committed to providing quality services to its consumers and will work towards achieving and exceeding the specified benchmarks.

3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

The most recent comprehensive statewide assessment was completed in the program year 2016 and has not been updated since. This information was collected from our consumers through a survey conducted by the VISRC. The comprehensive statewide assessment allows us the opportunity to identify service gaps, consumer needs, and ensure that performance accountability measures are met. As a result of the storms and the loss of council members, activities have been delayed. However, we are making progress and are scheduled to reconvene this program year. The VISRC was displaced and experienced connectivity issues which further complicated our ability to complete the assessment. We are working diligently to regain compliance and there are plans to conduct the CSNA before the close this year with the help of the University's research center.

B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

The VIDDRS tracks its performance accountability measures of 116 of WIOA through it's quarterly submission of the RSA 911 report. The VIDDRS is unable to report on the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA, and baseline data will reflect performance under this requirement. There is still a great need for training and support in this area and the program will work collaboratively with Department of Labor to improve reporting. Participants are tracked for several quarters after exit to capture their credential attainment and measurable skill gains. The state agency will work to develop a system to closely monitor participants progress after achieving employment.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

VIDDRS continues to address the findings and recommendations. We are in the process of updating our policies and procedures as required to enhance timely service delivery to clients and vendors. Within the last year, VISRC has experienced significant setback in terms of membership vacancies that we are currently working to correct. The recruitment of new members are ongoing to better support and advocate for the VR program and its clients. VIDDRS is very interactive and transparent as it relates to the sharing information about operation and programmatic challenges with the SRC that affect the effectiveness of the VR Program. SRC leadership has been at the table during meetings with core partners and has provided input that it believes will help the VIDDRS with WIOA mandates. Specifically as it relates to: • Outreach and marketing to impact access to VR services for the unserved and underserved. • Improving transition services for students and youth with disabilities • Implementation of an electronic client case management system.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES

VIDDRS will not implement an order of selection for VR services.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

Not Applicable.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS

Not Applicable.

D. TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER; AND

Not Applicable.

E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Not Applicable.

2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

Not Applicable.

N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act is utilized for the provision of supported employment services. VIDDRS will focus on improving employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities to include youths.

It was extremely difficult to realize the State's goal to identify individuals and ensure that eligible participants receive supported employment services throughout the entire course of the program year due to lack of certified job coaches and the down turn of the economy following the twin hurricanes. There are continue efforts to enhance collaboration with community partners and private service providers to provide these services for PY 2021 through PY 2023.

2. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED, WITH FUNDS RESERVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 603(D), FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING:

A. THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 4 YEARS; AND

The purpose of VIDDRS Supported Employment Program is to assist individuals and youths with the most significant disabilities to achieve employment outcomes. In providing these services, the State Agency will focus on developing customized employment opportunities and build relationships with collaborative with entities that can provide extended supports. The goal of the VIDDRS is to provide persons with disabilities who have traditionally been unsuccessful in obtaining integrated employment with the required support to transition into integrated and competitive employment. Each case is handled individually and based on the need, the VIDDRS will provide extended services for youths with most significant disabilities for a period of 4 years or up to age 25 whichever comes first.

B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

The VIDDRS first utilizes private funds such as medical insurance and other available resources from the Department of Health to fund extended services for youths before SE funds are

authorized. Half of the SE funds received are reserved for youths with the most significant disabilities who are between the ages of 14 and 24 years old. The services provided fosters an employment outcome and assist with skill-building. The agency will work collaboratively with other community partners within the workforce system and in the private sector to increase extended and expanded supported employment services. The VIDDRS will build new partnerships with employers, private businesses and local government agencies to increase resources for the population. Enforce staff training and professional development to ensure that staff remains on the cutting edge as it relates to opportunities for youths with the most significant disabilities.

O. STATE'S STRATEGIES

1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

VIDDRS, in collaboration with the partners of the workforce system, will implement, including industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations and career pathways, as required by WIOA section 101(d)(3)(B),(D) Workforce development activities revolve around the build-out of Industry sectors. The Territory's current demand sectors based on current hiring trends are: Administrative and Support Services, Allied Health, Construction Trades, and Information Technology. VR counselors will receive training to better assist clients to develop employment plans that will enable them to be employed in areas that provide opportunities to earn a living wage and in-demand sector industries that afford them opportunities for professional growth and career development.

The VR Transition Units (one each on St. Thomas and St. Croix) provide coordinated activities for transitioning students to assist them in preparing for jobs in integrated work settings. Transition Unit staff will assist with the implementation goals of the IPE as developed by the student's VR Counselor. VIDDRS will engage in collaborative initiatives to facilitate the provision of pre-employment services as required.

Students leaving for college will be provided with those assistive or technological devices necessary for the successful achievement of their post-secondary educational goals. Similarly, those clients entering the workforce will be assisted with the provision of assistive technology services to improve their performance in the workplace.

The State Agency will also partner with the Department of Education to hold joint training sessions for parents of students in the Special Education Program and plan educational and informational meetings with teachers, counselors, and coordinators of the education Department. VIDDRS will provide information about the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

The VIDDRS will strengthen its administrative, fiscal, and programmatic controls to ensure the smooth delivery of service to persons with disabilities. Provide training opportunities and conduct regular meetings with staff to ensure knowledge and skills in their duties.

2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS

VIDDRS will work collaboratively with VIUCEDD to facilitate opportunities for VR consumers to have access to AT services. VIDDRS recognizes the importance of technology in the business world. The full utilization of AT services and devices are needed to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve their full potential. VIDDRS will continue to provide these services through our partnership with local vendors as required to facilitate the achievement of client goals. Eligible persons with disabilities in the Virgin Islands receive devices from the Medical Assistance Program and also from the VIDDRS. This includes assistive technology such as visual and hearing aids, prosthetics and other independent living devices to improve mobility. Under

the VIUCEDD persons may qualify to receive interest loans to purchase assistive technology and through a local specialized vendor there are affordable hearing aid programs. The local telephone company also provides services for the hearing impaired and the elderly population. There are opportunities for training of personnel on the use of these devices through our specialized vendor and community partners.

3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM

Resources in the Virgin Islands are limited in relation to availability in other jurisdictions across the United States; this is due mainly to our geographical location from the continental United States. This has created a challenge for persons with disabilities and the VI Vocational Rehabilitation Program. A comprehensive database should be established to identify those persons that are minorities and have been marginalized by society. This provides an avenue to those individuals that are overlooked. Counselors will be encouraged to seek out opportunities for professional growth and career development that will effect change in the life of the consumer. VIDDRS plans to continue connecting with various community, civic and church groups to identify services needed by the minority and underserved populations.

4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES)

The methods used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities include the following initiatives. VIDDRS in both districts (St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix) is slated to provide coordinated activities for transitioning students to assist them in preparing for jobs in integrated work settings. Staff will assist with the implementation goals of the IPE as developed by the student's VR Counselor. VIDDRS will engage in collaborative initiatives to facilitate provision of pre-employment services as required. Students leaving for college will be provided with those assistive or technological devices necessary for their successful achievement of their post-secondary educational goals. Similarly, those clients entering the workforce will be assisted with the provision of assistive technology services to improve their performance in the workplace.

The State Agency will partner with the Department of Education to hold joint training sessions for parents of students in the Special Education Program and plan educational and informational meetings with teachers, counselors and coordinators of the education Department. VIDDRS will provide information about the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE

There are no community rehabilitation programs in the state at this time. Since we lost the CRPs several years ago, the VIDDRS has shifted its focus in hopes of delivering the services provided by the CRPs. The designated state agency plans to increase employment outcomes and skill level of consumers to include youths by utilizing a more integrated approach through the use of the American One-Stop Center. The VIDDRS will engage the partners in the One-Stop to provide various services. Through the implementation of the electronic case management system that will enhance collaboration with partners and provide a platform for consumers to access more services. VIDDRS will continue to lobby for new employers to become VR partners while providing sensitivity training to educate on the needs of the population. Regular consumer

assessments conducted by VISRC and VISILC will be encouraged to assist in identifying service gaps.

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

The VIDDRS continues to implement the following strategies to improve state performance with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators. Continue with the practice of sharing periodically statistical information with staff. Articulate intervention plans with Managers in order to comply with the established goals. Continue efforts to procure an electronic case management system as it will make a significant improvement in the area of data collection. It can be modified to follow the participants after exiting the program. This will assist with the accountability measures under section 116 of the WIOA and id with tracking throughout the quarters after exit. The VIDDRS will focus on employer engagement and provide training or orientations to improve awareness about the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities, and also inform them about technical assistance after placement. The VIDDRS will continue to refer consumers to other core programs and continue to promote post-secondary education among consumers. Sensitivity trainings will be made available to all stakeholders to include core partners. The VIDDRS will continue to work with core and non-core partners to strengthen its efforts and improve its performance.

7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

VIDDRS, in collaboration with the partners of the workforce system, will forge industry or sector partnerships as it relates to in-demand industry sectors, occupations and career pathways, as required by WIOA section 101(d)(3)(B),(D) Workforce development activities revolve around the build-out of Industry sectors. The Territory's current demand sectors based on current hiring trends are: Administrative and Support Services, Allied Health, Construction Trades, Information Technology, Leisure and Hospitality, and Transportation and Logistics. VR counselors have received training to better assist clients to develop employment plans that will foster employment and provide opportunities to earn a living wage and encourage professional growth and career development. The VIDDRS coordinates activities for transitioning students to assist them in preparing for jobs in integrated work settings. The VR counselor will assist with the implementation goals of the IPE and engage in collaborative initiatives with the board to facilitate the provision of pre-employment services as required. VIDDRS will provide information about the Vocational Rehabilitation program and the available post-secondary services. Students leaving for college will be provided with assistive or technological devices necessary for the successful achievement of their post-secondary educational goals. Similarly, those clients entering the workforce will be assisted with the provision of assistive technology services to improve their performance in the workplace and maintain their employment. The State Agency participates in the American Job Center-One Stop to ensure that persons with disabilities' needs are met. The VIDDRS has conducted joint training sessions and job fairs with the Department of Education and the Department of Labor to exchange ideas on how to better serve the consumers.

8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

The overarching goal of the State Agency and stakeholders is to create a permanent pipeline to prosperity in the territory through available resources and support services. Therefore, all the goals and priorities are aligned to meet said goal and the VIDDRS is committed to doing its part to ensure that persons with disabilities have a voice and are included in the workforce. The

goals identified in the 2016 combined needs assessment will be used as marker to determine the achievement of set goals and will significantly help to improve the territory ability to meet the future needs of persons with disabilities. The goals identified by the last assessment were to increase program visibility, promote pre-employment transition services, develop new partnerships, staff professional development and improve service delivery to clients. The strategies employed by the Designated State Agency include the following but are not limited to:

Continued participation in IEP, PTA and Office of Special Education Advisory Panel meetings.

Initiated a marketing and advertisement campaign through a private provider to promote community awareness.

Held and participated in career fairs that catered to individuals with disabilities seeking an employment outcome.

Attended meetings and participated in conference calls with core partners and the Workforce Board to build capacity.

Provided refresher training to staff, partners and stakeholders on the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Facilitated ongoing training for staff to increase awareness of labor markets and customized employment options.

Working to implement a strategic service alignment plan that will outline goals and objectives for all the partner agencies with expected timelines.

Developed on the job training program with the local education agency.

Implement summer work training initiatives for students with disabilities to acquire skills and experience.

Conducted online training program to the pre-employment transition student population.

Continue to provide opportunities for skill gains and credentialing.

Discussions are ongoing with local agencies and/or programs to forge new partnerships.

Establishing rapport with potential employers and maintaining established relationships.

Pursuing a contract to implement an electronic case management system that will encourage collaboration between the partner agencies and improve service delivery.

Once the next CSNA is completed prior to the close of the year, the results will be used to identify current goals, priorities and strategies to be included in the state plan amendment.

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

The VIDDRS will continue to explore the needs of these activities within the community. Some areas that these activities will assist in supporting persons with disabilities in the election process by ensuring that they have the resources to exercise their right to vote. Advocate for transportation and accessibility needs, creating an executive order that addresses the needs of persons with disabilities. The VIDDRS will continue to support the State Rehabilitation Council and State Independent Living Council with their operations in PY 2020 and 2021 to ensure that the appropriate services are available to the disabled population.

C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

The VIDDRS has made services available to all individuals with disabilities despite barriers. The agency is involved in various community outreach activities and at times when needed travels to provide VR and SE services. Therefore, the necessary steps are taken to alleviate barriers as they are presented. However, there is a great need for certified job coaches in the Virgin Islands. The VIDDRS will work towards eliminating the shortfall in personnel by advocating for the program's critical need to fill positions through the Human Resources Department and securing supported employment services through private providers.

P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

The VIDDRS goal to promote pre-employment transition services was realized by strengthening the collaboration with core community partners such as the State Workforce Board, Virgin Islands Department of Labor, Virgin Islands Department of Education, SNAP, TANF & MAP programs, VIUCEED, Center for Independent Living, and the Disability Rights Center. Through this coordination of services, consumers are educated on available transition services and benefits from a well-rounded customer focused approach. The agency expanded its services to transition aged students to include school based on the job training and online work-readiness workshops and paid summer internships. The program is in discussions with several partners to deliver various pre-employment training opportunities to students prior to graduation.

With respect to a second goal to advance staff knowledge base, heightening awareness and promote staff professional development for staff. Technical assistance was provided on several occasions throughout the program year to build their skillset, enhance professionalism/customer service and avoid burnout. Staff is engaged in numerous webinars, conference call, virtual and in person trainings. Staff are strongly encouraged to become high qualified counselors by attaining advance degrees and acquiring their certification in rehabilitation counseling, CRC. Expanding and building capacity of the VIDDRS staff to address the diverse needs of the population is of high priority.

To forge a relationship with new community partners to ensure that the target population receives services to prepare, secure and retain employment especially for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The State agency through affiliation with the Workforce Board have connected with new employers and stakeholders that will aid in rebuilding the workforce. A new relationship was formed with a private provider to assist in the provision of supported employment services. This is a considerable accomplishment for the program as it has been extremely challenging to retain certified job coaches in the territory. This collaboration will broadened the scope of available services offered by the VIDDRS.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Some of the factors that impeded the achievement of goals and priorities are the State agency inability onboard new personnel and the constant change in administration. The program has been faced with budget cuts and these cuts prohibits the program from hiring the required staff to successfully and efficiently operate the program. During program year 2020, the program remains grossly understaffed and there are a number of personnel that qualifies for retirement within the next two years. The VR program is constantly evolving and therefore, there is a great need to begin succession planning within the agency in order to retain the historical knowledge and facilitate the continuity of services.

The procurement arm of the Government is the Department of Property and Procurement and the approval process to execute a contractual agreement is quite lengthy and cumbersome. This unfortunate circumstance presents a barrier in the procurement of the much needed electronic case management system as services cannot be provided without a contract in place. Therefore, at this time the program is forced to compile data and maintain case records manually. This prevents the program from moving towards an improved delivery of services through the use of technology and fully adhering to the data sharing requirements as stipulated by WIOA.

For the remainder of FFY 2020 and FFY2021, VIDDRS will continue to collaborate with community partners, stakeholders, and councils to develop and refine its strategies to ensure that goals and priorities are met and exceed.

2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

Based on the last completed assessment, the VIDDRS main goal in this area was to ensure that eligible participants receive the mandated services. The state agency experienced difficulty in securing and maintaining certified job coaches and these services were extremely limited to non-existent. Through the collaboration with community and core partners in the VI workforce system, the VIDDRS was aided in the achievement of its' program goals. As a result, new relationships formed with a private provider namely Island Therapy Solutions to provide person centered counseling, job development and placement, long term support and post employment training. The VIDDRS will continue to engage employers in sensitivity trainings to educate on the specialized needs of an individual with disabilities. This form of intervention will help to bridge the gap in connecting the talent pool with employers that are seeking to hire highly qualified individuals with excellent work ethics.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The lack of adequate staff has impeded the achievement of the program's goals and priorities. The VIDDRS has not hired or onboarded new personnel for the past three years. Consequently, there are several critical vacancies that need to be filled in order to successfully achieve said goals. Since the storms, the VIDDRS has struggled to identify appropriate office space in both districts which has proven to be extremely problematic and counterproductive.

3. THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

The VIDDRS performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA were reported as baseline for PY 2018 & PY 2019. The program was unable to collect this data, however, an increase anticipated for PY 2020 and 2021. The state agency is slated to receive training on measurable skill gains and performance accountability to ensure accurate reporting for the upcoming quarterly submissions.

4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED

VIDDRS provides support to VISRC and VISILC activities with these funds. In the program year 2018, the VISRC and VISILC were in the process of recruiting new board members as the

membership lost members due to the twin storms and expired terms. Therefore, no funds were expended during this time. Usually, these funds are utilized to forge productive relationships with community partners. Additionally, there are ongoing discussions with the State Office of Special Education and VI Developmental Disabilities Council on mutually beneficial projects. Collaboration on this level has had a positive impact on the achievement of established goals. These relationships have facilitate consistency in the implementation of services territory-wide.

Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

1. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

The Designated State agency will work with the Department of Education, Office of Special Education to identify individuals and youth with the most significant disabilities through the IEP and transition process. The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services will be based on the client's informed choice and specific need for certain services such as job coaching, life skills, and mobility orientation training. VIDDRS will conduct a thorough assessment of the client's needs and supported employment services are provided through various private providers to the most significant disabilities. Supported Employment Services begin after placement and are available to individuals with significant disabilities to include youths. Services are provided for up to two years unless it becomes necessary to extend services to achieve a successful employment outcome. The decision to extend services must be agreed on jointly by the counselor and the eligible participant.

VIDDRS also collaborates with the Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, VIUCEDD to provide supported employment services. The state agency is pursuing services through the Island Therapy Solutions, Inc. The provider agrees to increase the employment readiness of people with disabilities residing in the USVI by providing on-the-job training with a qualified job coach who is competent in disability-related employment needs and supports. A preliminary file review will be conducted to assess the Supported Employment Trainee's knowledge, skill, and ability to enable a custom match of an employment site and job coach. Provider will identify 3-5 employment placement sites and train 5 job coaches in each district (St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix) during the initial phase of the project. Job coaches will acclimate trainees to the work environment and provide any support that will allow the trainee to successfully integrate into a long term job setting. Job coaches will complete a rigorous job coach training program to gain competency in supporting persons with disabilities and facilitating job choice. Supported Employment Trainees will have the opportunity to learn employment skills, expectations, independent living skills, and etiquette in order to secure meaningful employment while fostering social relationships with peers or customers with or without disabilities. Provider shall aid in the acquisition of assistive technology tools, resources, and supports that will allow trainees with disabilities to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities and independence in the workplace.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

The timing of transition to extended services will be determined after eligibility is established, a service plan is developed and all other interventions have been exhausted. Youths with disabilities will receive extended support services for a year to ensure a successful transition or achieve an employment outcome. However, youths with significant disabilities are eligible to receive extended services for up to four years or until the age of 25, whichever comes first. The State Agency will be responsible for creating a support system within the workplace and regular monitoring to provide further support as needed.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY WIOA[14], AND ITS SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT[15];

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Virgin Islands Department of Human Services, Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services

2. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY)[16] AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[17], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[18], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER SECTION 111 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Virgin Islands Department of Human Services

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[19], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[20], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND/OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Kimberley Causey Gomez

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Kimberley Causey Gomez

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

FOOTNOTES

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

Signatory information	Virgin Islands Department of Human Services
Name of Signatory	Kimberley Causey Gomez
Title of Signatory	Commissioner
Date Signed	March 9, 2020

ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include	Include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.	
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
3.a. The establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.b. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) "is an independent State commission" (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
3.c. Consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.d. The financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3)	
3.e. The local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	No
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	No
3.h. The descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.i. All required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.j. The requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.k. The compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
3.l. The reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities	
3.m. The submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:	
4.a. Comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.b. Impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act	

The State Plan must include	Include
4.c. Provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	Yes
4.d. Determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.e. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.g. Provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.h. Comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act	
4.i. Meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs	
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,	
4.j.i. Has developed and will implement,	
4.j.i.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	
4.j.i.II. Strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and	
4.j.ii. Has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25))	
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act	
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act	

The State Plan must include	Include
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act	
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act	
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:	Yes
7.a. The Designated State Agency Assures That it Will Provide Supported Employment Services as Defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b. The designated State agency assures that:	
7.b.i. The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act	
7.b.ii. An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Credential Attainment Rate	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Measurable Skill Gains	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

All WIOA Core Programs

Performance Indicators	PY 2020 Expected Level	PY 2020 Negotiated Level	PY 2021 Expected Level	PY 2021 Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹ *"Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.*

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

Additional Indicators of Performance
Non-Applicable

OTHER APPENDICES

Non-Applicable